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BUSES

Issue No. 619

October 2006

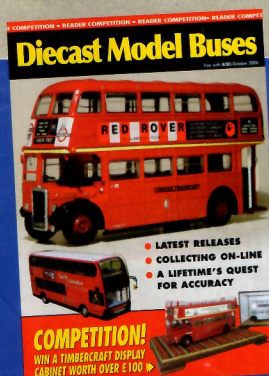
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Annual Subscriptions:

Home: £43.20. Europe: £49.20. Rest of World (economy airmail): £51.20.

Rest of World (first class airmail): £60.70

Refunds: We regret that all subscription refund requests are subject to a £5 administration charge.

Binders: Magazine binders available from Buses Subscriptions only £7.45 each post free to UK addresses, overseas orders please add £2.50 per binder. Please make cheques payable to Ian Allan Publishing Ltd.

Back Issues: Subject to availability. To avoid disappointment, check availability before you order.

Each copy costs cover price plus postage and packing: £1.00 UK; £2.00 mainland Europe; £2.50 Rest of World.

Mail Order Book Enquiries: MCP Mail Order, 4 Watling Drive, Hinckley, Leicestershire LE10 3EY. Tel: 01455 233747. Fax: 01455 233737. e-mail: midlandbooks@compuserve.com

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Buses is published on the third Friday of each month preceding the cover date by:

Publisher: Ian Allan Publishing Ltd, Hersham, Surrey KT12 4RG. Tel: 01932 266600. Fax: 01932 266601.

Registered Office: Terminal House, Shepperton, Middlesex TW17 8AS.

Origination/Printing: Ian Allan Printing Ltd, Hersham, Surrey KT12 4RG. estimates@ianallanprinting.co.uk

Distribution: Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 5th Floor, Low Rise Building, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS. Enquiries Line: 020 7633 3333

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ISSN: 0007-6392

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OPERATORS ON A FINANCIAL KNIFE-EDGE

Of all the possible factors that could take the gloss off the bus industry's 20th year of deregulation, it is the double financial millstone caused by the relentless hike in oil prices and the damage that successive stock market crises have wrought upon their pensions funds.

This month, we have abundant evidence of these two potentially lethal factors that haunt the future of small to medium-sized bus operators. While taking time out to celebrate his company's own 80th birthday, East Yorkshire Motor Services chairman Peter Shipp admits that his business's future independence depends more than anything else on stable fuel prices and the cost of servicing a pension fund that seemed in good shape when it was started 19 years ago. He doesn't want it to lose that independence and has no plan to end it, but the threat is clearly there.

Likewise, the almost concurrent sales of two more north-west England municipal bus companies — Blackburn and Chester — may well have been accelerated by these same concerns. In Blackburn, the Labour council has secured agreement of its two main opposition parties to sell a 100-vehicle operation that has been recording trading losses for four successive years and which it appears to have lost confidence in being able to turn back into a money spinner.

In Chester, the Liberal Democrat council has singled out the rise in fuel prices as its biggest reason for not investing in much needed new buses for the ChesterBus fleet, which it believes will thrive in the hands of a larger group.

Rising pension costs were a major factor behind the former owners of Wilts & Dorset's decision to sell out to Go-Ahead three years ago. And while the pension fund may not have been the reason for Stagecoach selling its London operations this past summer, the proceeds of that sale have clearly been very useful in bolstering the group's pension funds.

These pressures are not confined to teetering municipals or 20-year-old management buy-outs. They are hitting the profits of operators of all sizes throughout the land. They help explain why FirstGroup is pulling the rug from under its poorly performing largely rural routes in Devon and Cornwall. They help us understand the past 18 months' upsurge in sales of bus companies. And they should make us less surprised if we hear that more medium-sized independents and arms' length municipal bus companies choose to give up the unequal struggle.

As Peter Shipp also explains, these cost pressures are also making operators increasingly aware of the potential for buying more fuel-efficient buses. When manufacturers start talking of measurable fuel savings with the move to the latest Euro4 engines and also can offer buses that are nearly 25% lighter than otherwise comparable heavy-duty vehicles, we could be on the brink of a change in buying habits. Until now, many operators have been swayed by the arguments about the longevity and notional standing capacity of heavy-duty products, but with fuel costs potentially making the difference between an operator's survival or demise, these other arguments may prove more compelling.

ALAN MILLAR

Cover picture: East Yorkshire has repainted Plaxton President-bodied Volvo B7TL 670 in traditional indigo and primrose to mark the company's 80th anniversary.

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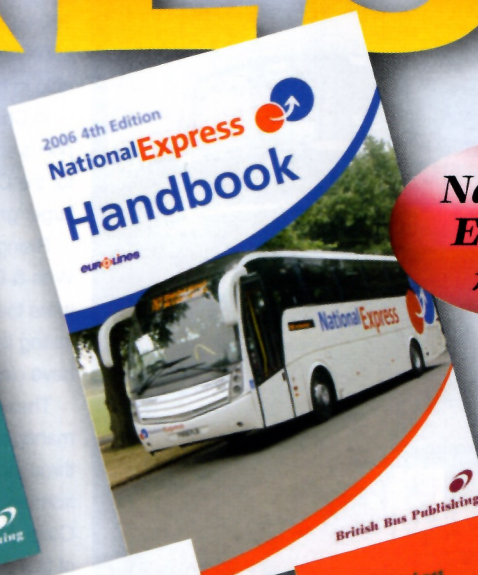
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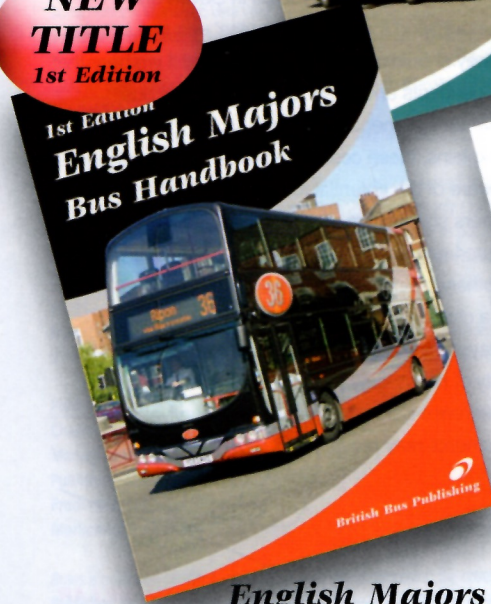
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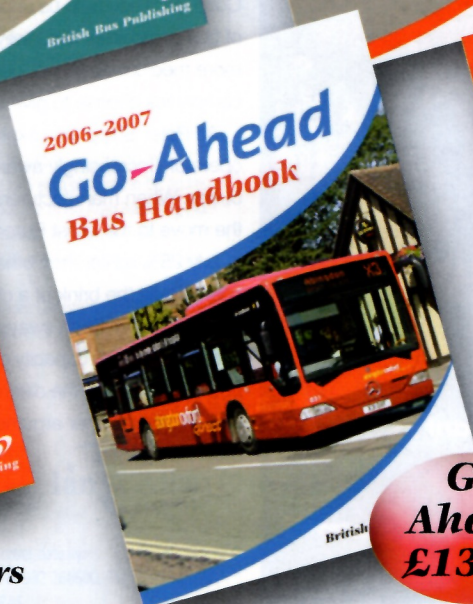


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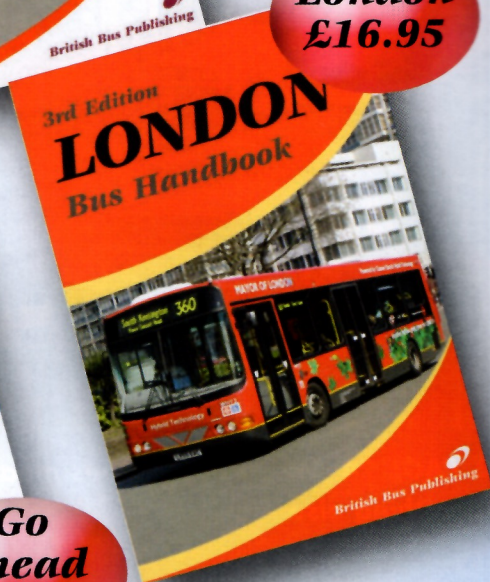


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Two more municipals head for private ownership

The ranks of council-owned bus companies are poised to fall to 14. Agreement was reached in August to sell Blackburn Transport to French-owned Transdev and Chester City Council has confirmed plans to sell ChesterBus.

Although first mooted a year ago, Blackburn with Darwen Council appeared to have put bus privatisation on its back burner over the winter. However, the Labour-controlled authority has secured all-party agreement to sell the 100-vehicle company for a so-far-undisclosed sum.

Transdev — through Blazefield Holdings, whose Lancashire United and Burnley & Pendle businesses already are the dominant east Lancashire operators — will acquire 100% of the company. The council rejected an offer from Transdev of a similar deal to that agreed last year with Bournemouth Council, which would have left 10% of the shareholding in council hands. Council leader Kate Hollern says that would have been 'tokenism'.

The sale should be completed by the end of the year and Transdev intends to renew the Blackburn fleet, the newest of which is now four years old. The company, which earlier this year marked the 125th anniversary of the start of municipal trams Blackburn, is reported to have made a five-figure loss in the year to 31 March, the fourth in a row. It lost £74,536 in 2004/05, £68,233 in 2003/04 and £462,243 in 2002/03, when its coach holiday operation closed.

In a joint statement, the Labour, Conservative and LibDem leaders said: 'This agreement is good news for the borough. It will secure the future of the transport company and local jobs while at the same time



Above: Blackburn Transport 5 (PCB 24) — one of five East Lancs Millennium Lolyne-bodied Dennis Tridents new four years ago — wears a livery (sponsored by the bodybuilder, which is based in the town) marking the 125th anniversary of the start of municipal tram services. **PHIL HALEWOOD**

bringing much needed investment into public transport, which will be welcomed by bus users. It is important that as the borough grows and continues to thrive it is served by a first class public transport sector. We are confident that this agreement will play a major part in helping make that happen.'

Cllr Hollern says: 'My job is to make sure people get the best possible services. I don't think the general public cares who delivers it. Blackburn Transport, as it is, is certainly unsustainable.' Conservative leader Colin Rigby, endorsing the sale, says: 'Transdev is a professional company and will do a good job for us.' However, Transport & General Workers Union representative Jim Casey argues that the deal does not guarantee jobs (the company employs 130), fares or all routes.

'We feel we have been sold down the river. To me, it seems they are washing their hands of Blackburn Transport.'

LibDem-controlled Chester says 12 companies have already expressed interest in buying ChesterBus, which has 81 buses (the eight newest are three-year-old BMC Falcons on park-&-ride work) and 125 employees. It recorded a £62,174 loss in 2004/05 and has been hit by steep rises in fuel and other costs, depriving it of funds to buy new low-floor buses. Parts of its city centre depot date from 1878 and although planning permission has been granted for a new out-of-town depot at Bumpers Lane, construction has not started.

Announcing their plans to sell the company, council leader Paul Roberts and his deputy, John Price, said: 'New

investment is required to sustain the future of the company and the people who provide those services. The council does not believe that the long-term success of the business is best served by it remaining in council ownership.

'The council has not taken this decision lightly. It has kept the prospects for the company under review for a number of years and feels that the company is now at the point where the prospects for investment and continued development of bus services in Chester would be better served by new ownership. The welfare of employees and sustainability of services have been key considerations and the position of employees will remain a significant factor when reviewing and making decisions on any offers made for the company.'

Although the council has named none of the potential buyers, Arriva — which has a strategy of making bolt-on acquisitions and has taken over several routes abandoned by First in Cheshire — is dominant in the area, as indeed is First around Chester.



Left: ChesterBus BMC Falcon 90 (BU53 PNK), one of eight delivered at the end of 2003 for expanded park-&-ride commitments. **HARRY BARKER**

Government set to liberalise N Ireland bus routes

The government has revealed plans to give private sector operators as-yet-unspecified access to bus routes in Northern Ireland.

Regional development minister David Cairns says a Passenger Transport Authority for Northern Ireland will be created to design, secure and manage services in the largely rural province. He says it will take over Translink's responsibility for facilities such as bus stations, ticketing mechanisms and information services, with government — currently in Westminster, possibly later in a revived Belfast assembly — remaining responsible for policy and legislation.

The PTA would remove the current conflict of interest that gives Ulsterbus, Translink's principal operating subsidiary, the right to retain bus and coach stations for its exclusive use. Earlier this year, Aircoach — FirstGroup's Irish subsidiary — alleged that Translink was acting in an anti-competitive manner by refusing to allow Aircoach access to its Europa Bus Centre in Belfast, as Aircoach's Dublin-

Belfast route competes with long established Ulsterbus/Bus Éireann joint services.

The minister's announcement is less clear about the future role of private sector operators, beyond saying that the new regime will permit the introduction of new and innovative services, but does not represent wholesale privatisation or complete deregulation. He also wants to move away from the government funding Translink's new buses towards revenue support for contracted services, as in Great Britain.

Eleanor Gill, chief executive of the Consumer Council in Northern

Ireland, hopes the new arrangements will reverse the continuing decline in bus travel on Ulsterbus local services. 'While Translink will continue to be the major bus and train operator here, the arrangements will allow for more competition in public transport provision in an integrated and managed way,' she says.

Translink is less enthusiastic about the changes, fearing that private sector operators might concentrate on the best routes. And it is pressing ahead with its own plans (*Buses May*) to subcontract the provision of additional Goldline Express

services between Belfast and Omagh, Enniskillen, Londonderry and Coleraine. It is close to concluding an arrangement with Chambers Coaches of Moneymore to provide these services using Goldline-liveried coaches.

When Ulsterbus was formed out of the break-up of the Ulster Transport Authority in 1967, two small groups of services were handed over to new private sector operators, Coastal Bus Service of Portrush and Sureline Coaches of Lurgan, but both operators subsequently sold out to Ulsterbus.



Right: Ulsterbus 2994 (EEZ 2994), an Alexander Dennis ALX400-bodied Volvo B7TL, leaving Belfast for the International airport at Aldergrove, one of the routes on which private sector operators may be permitted to compete. **RICHARD WALTER**

Dublin Bus franchising may become election issue

A dispute between the two parties in the Republic of Ireland's coalition government over proposals to franchise parts of the Greater Dublin bus network is holding up

investment in new buses and could become an issue in the general election due before next July.

Transport minister Martin Cullen, a Fianna Fail party

member, averted a national bus strike in August by promising trades unions to put proposals to his cabinet colleagues for the government to invest over £47million in 100 additional new buses for Dublin Bus and 160 for Bus Éireann. He has also placated the unions by undertaking to protect all existing routes from competition and only to open up 15% of new routes in expanding outer suburban areas to the private sector.

Fianna Fail's Progressive Democrat coalition partners want the government to go much farther by opening up 25%

of existing routes — including busy inner city services — and 100% of new ones to competitive tender, with Dublin Bus being free to bid alongside the private sector. They might block funding for the additional buses until reforms are agreed.

Michael Faherty, acting general secretary of the National Bus & Rail Union, warns that industrial action remains likely if funds are not agreed for the additional buses. 'If the minister does not deliver, our members will be ready to take to the streets again, as they have so often in the past to champion the cause of public transport.'



Left: One of the few private sector bus services running currently in Dublin is the Circle Line route of Morton's of Rathfarnham. Here, East Lancs Millennium Vyking-bodied Volvo B7TL 06 D 22209 runs among Dublin Bus double-deckers. **EAMON McARTHUR**

Stagecoach/Citylink joint venture faces 'bizarre' break-up threat

The future of inter-city coach services in Scotland has been thrown into question by the Competition Commission, which may order the break-up of the joint venture established last year between Stagecoach and Scottish Citylink.

Announcing provisional findings of its inquiry into the venture, in which Stagecoach has a 34% stake to Citylink parent ComfortDelGro's 66%, the commission says the venture has substantially lessened competition on the 'Saltire Cross' Glasgow-Aberdeen and Edinburgh-Inverness routes, which cross at Perth. It believes this is already increasing fares and could reduce the number of departures.

The commission is proposing either that the joint venture is ended at least on those routes, that either of the partners sells its coach operation, that the Citylink routes are franchised to independent operators or the joint venture is held to fares and service level obligations. It says it intends to announce its final recommendations by 24 October.

Tom Wileman, the senior Stagecoach executive who also is managing director of the venture, says the commission's decision is 'bizarre' and 'out of step with the majority of evidence presented...by a range of independent parties' and that it has 'completely misunderstood the inter-city transport market' where coaches compete with First ScotRail trains and private cars.

'The fact is that the joint venture has delivered the biggest improvement to the inter-city coach network in Scotland in decades, offering better links, faster services and value-for money fares. It has signalled the return of the coach as a real alternative to the train. It also supports government moves to tackle congestion and make public transport a viable and attractive option for motorists. Coach travel is a real lifeline for thousands of pensioners, students and tourists. The remedies being considered by the commission could put the future of coach services in Scotland at serious risk.'

The joint venture manages Citylink services within Scotland, Stagecoach's Scottish and Anglo-Scottish Megabus services and its Motorvator services between Edinburgh and Glasgow. By



Above: A Citylink-liveried Jonckheere Mistral-bodied Volvo B12M of Park's of Hamilton leaving Aberdeen for Glasgow on the joint venture's 'Saltire Cross' route M9. **KEITH MCGILLIVRAY**

contrast with the north-south routes, the commission believes there has been no substantial lessening of competition on the Edinburgh-Glasgow route. It believes that, without the joint venture, Stagecoach would probably have withdrawn the Motorvator service, leaving this east-west route entirely to Citylink.

The inquiry chairman, accountancy Prof John Baillie, says: 'Stagecoach's low cost Megabus service and Scottish Citylink were competing on the "Saltire Cross" routes before the joint venture, to the benefit of passengers who could take advantage of the lower fares and other offers that resulted from this competition. By bringing together the only two effective coach competitors on these routes...the joint venture has removed constraints on their fares and service levels. There are significant barriers that would prevent other firms from entering this market and other forms of transport act as only weak constraints on coach fares.'

He adds: 'Following the joint venture, we have seen evidence of fares increasing more than costs on these routes.'

The wording accompanying its four suggested remedies implies that the commission favours more drastic action than fares and service level obligations — largely because fares are often modified at short notice in order to sell the maximum number of tickets. That would make it difficult to monitor whether Stagecoach and Citylink complied with fares controls. One option might be for the joint venture to pay an independent third party to monitor fares and service levels.

If it orders the joint venture to sell either its Megabus or Scottish Citylink operations at least on the 'Saltire Cross' routes, the commission says a buyer would need to be a suitably financed business independent of either Stagecoach or ComfortDelGro and also free from competitive concerns, which presumably rules

out National Express (which provides some Anglo-Scottish services over these routes) and probably also First. If Citylink's 'Saltire Cross' routes were franchised to independent operators, the commission says there would need to be genuine competition between the franchisees and Megabus.

Terravision challenges Arriva to Liverpool Airport

Terravision, the Italian airport coach operator already established on the Stansted-London route, started its second UK venture on 7 August running round the clock between Manchester city centre and Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

Its Irizar Century-bodied Scania K114 coaches licensed to Excalibur

Coaches of London are competing with Arriva North West, which uses three Mercedes-Benz Citaro low-floor buses. The advertised return fare is £10, but until 6 October

Terravision is matching Arriva's £5 return. It advertises quicker journeys — 50min against 75min by Arriva — and runs at up to half-hourly intervals with a schedule implying the use of four coaches. *Picture by PHIL HALEWOOD*



Stagecoach reaches Cornwall on summer Sundays

Stagecoach has begun operating seasonally into Cornwall for the first time. This is part of its expansion into North Devon to take over commercial and supported services withdrawn in First's latest service cuts.

Its initial step across the county boundary is only on summer Sundays and bank holidays, when Devon County Council-supported service 319 (Barnstaple-Clovelly-Hartland) extends to Bude, so it will run

there until 24 September and again from 27 May next year. It has transferred an early model Dennis Trident to its new Pottington, Barnstaple depot and is branding the service as Atlantic Coastline.

It took over the 319 service on 3 September along with five school and college contracts, with at least seven Leyland and Volvo Olympian double-deckers allocated to Barnstaple. Further expansion is planned for 1 October, when

Stagecoach takes over service 308 (Barnstaple-Croyde-Georgeham) from First, using two new Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts, and First's last remaining Barnstaple town services (8 and 10) with six new Optare Solos. It has also registered service 115 (Barnstaple-Exeter) to replace First's 315 on this route.

The North Devon cuts are part of a bigger cutback by First. A new operator, Dolton-based Beacon Bus, took over Bideford town services 14, 15/A and 16/A on 4 September, using three Solos and adding a new half-hourly link to the Atlantic Village retail outlet. Beacon Bus took over three other First routes on 31 July, along with a Devon Council-owned LDV minibus, and expands again on 1 October to take over contracted service 372 (Barnstaple-Bideford-Bradworthy) from First.

Also from 4 September, Plymouth Citybus took over First routes 58/59 (Plymouth-Lee Moor) in South Devon, while in Cornwall Sunset Coaches' new route 349 part-replaces First's route 16 (Penzance-St Ives) and Truronian T50 replaces First's 50 (Truro-

St Mawes) and adds a Sunday service. These are all supported services. Western Greyhound new service 521 replaces the Newquay-St Dennis section of First's commercial 21 between 09.00 and 15.00 and extends through to Par at other times; Greyhound also replaced Sunday services 21B and 28 between Newquay and St Austell.

Frequency reductions from 4 September include a combination of services 2 and 7 on the Penzance-Helston-Falmouth corridor and halving double-deck X80 (Plymouth-Torquay) to hourly, its winter frequency.

Devon Council has retendered nine other First contracts due to expire on 1 October, including the Barnstaple park-&-ride. It has re-awarded the single Saturday return journey on X85 (Barnstaple-Plymouth) to First, but had yet to announce the other results as we closed for press.

■ The new operator of Devon-supported service 309 (Barnstaple-Lynton) is TW Coaches of South Molton, not M&H Coaches (*Buses last month*).

Below: Stagecoach Devon 17006 (S806 BWC), a Dennis Trident new as a two-door London bus, has been fitted with an LED destination display for its new role on Atlantic Coastline service 319. **TOM BRAUND**



Lincoln network converted to low-floor Darts

Stagecoach Lincolnshire rebranded its Lincoln city services as Just Go at the beginning of August, when it converted the network to low-floor operation using 12 Pointer Darts cascaded from its London business and existing Super Buzz-branded Darts, which have been rebranded and are being repainted.

The new city network requires the same number of vehicles as

before, but underperforming routes in three areas have been thinned and rerouted, while 10 other areas have seen increases from 12 and 20min frequencies to every 10 or 15min. To minimise disruption on broken links, Stagecoach has introduced a seven-day Megarider for £10 and a £2.50 Dayrider. These tickets were available at half-price for the first four weeks through a local

newspaper offer, and early figures show a 6.5% sales increase.

■ Stagecoach Lincolnshire has closed its Railway Terrace depot in Grimsby and moved its small fleet

allocation into the larger Victoria Street depot of Stagecoach Grimsby-Cleethorpes, which transfers from Stagecoach East Midlands control to Lincolnshire from 24 September.

Below: Stagecoach Lincolnshire Dennis/Plaxton Pointer Dart 34189 (W189 DNO), one of the last buses cascaded from London before Stagecoach sold its businesses in the UK capital, operating on the revamped Lincoln city network. **EAMONN KENTELL**



New double-deckers for Newcastle



Stagecoach North East put the first of 23 Alexander Dennis Enviro400s with 56-prefix registrations into service from its Slatyford and Walkergate depots in Newcastle on 2 September. They are the group's first new double-deckers for Newcastle in seven years, when 22 Dennis Tridents were delivered. Persistent vandalism led to their transfer to Manchester in 2001 in exchange for MAN single-deckers. *Picture by STEVEN HODGSON*

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OM41404 AEC Regent V/ROE, Felix Motors Ltd. OM46002 Wrightbus Urban Eclipse, Whitelaws Coaches. OM46003 Wrightbus Urban Eclipse, Lothian Buses Plc, CC25907 AEC Routemaster, London Transport, The last Routemaster

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More brands, fares pilot as Arriva reacts to Go North East revamp

Go North East has unveiled four more route brands as its network relaunch extends into Gateshead. It also is piloting low fares in two socially deprived areas, and has apparently spurred Arriva into launching competing services.

Routes between Newcastle, Blaydon, Crawcrook and Ryton are being converted to The Blaydon Racers, a more direct route with eight orange low-floor Super Pointer Dennis Darts an hour on the Newcastle-Blaydon section and every 15min to Crawcrook or Ryton; 12 SPDs carry this livery. Seven Volvo B10BLEs have appeared in a lime green The Highwayman livery, while the four articulated Scania on the X66 MetroCentre-Gateshead shuttle are rebranded Centre Link and painted silver blue.

Services 53/54 between Newcastle and Saltwell Park are being increased in frequency, re-routed direct by the Redheugh Bridge and rebranded as The Saltwell Park, using five SPDs. Arriva launched competing service 153/154 between Gateshead and Saltwell Park at the beginning of September, possibly in response to Go North East's planned extension of X11 (Heworth Metro-Peterlee) to Hartlepool, in competition with Arriva and Stagecoach.

From 3 September, Go North East began piloting reduced and simplified fares on its routes in Saltwell and Bensham, in a joint initiative with Nexus, the Tyne & Wear PTE, which is helping fund



research into the effects of the initiative. As part of what it calls a 'third way' between re-regulation and unfettered deregulation, the operator has also undertaken to stabilise timetables for three years, cap fares increases to inflation and have a stakeholder board for local participation in decision making. 'This initiative is part of our work to forge stronger and more



effective partnerships with Nexus and Gateshead Council, in order to close the gap between the service we provide and the needs of the community,' says managing director Peter Huntley.

Above and left: The Blaydon Racers branding on Super Pointer Dart 8231 (X231 FBB), The Highwayman on Wright Renown-bodied Volvo B10BLE 4917 (X917 WGR) and Centre Link metallic blue on Wright Solar Fusion-bodied Scania L94UA 4952 (NK51 OLU). **STEVEN HODGSON**

New buses, tighter timetable for Heathrow Green Line

Arriva the Shires & Essex has relaunched the only Green Line route still serving Heathrow Airport — the 724 to Watford, Hertford and Harlow — in a quality partnership with Hertfordshire County Council and airport operator BAA Heathrow, which both helped fund nine new buses.

After eight years, Mercedes-Benz Citaros with air

conditioning and floor-level luggage accommodation have replaced Plaxton Prestige-bodied DAF SB220s on the service, which provides hourly orbital links with the north-south rail lines through Hertfordshire, as well as many overlapping short distance journeys for commuters, shoppers and schoolchildren. The buses wear a similar Best Impressions-

designed livery to Arriva's wheelchair accessible Van Hool Alizée coaches on the Luton Airport-London shuttle, while the dedicated — and customer service trained — drivers have new Green Line uniforms instead of standard Arriva garb.

To improve reliability, three sections of route most prone to delays have been bypassed by swapping provision with local services, some timetable tweaking should improve reliability and 19 of the 70 stops have been removed.

Future plans include through ticketing from connecting trains, marketing support from Transport for London and — if ridership grows in the longer term — doubling the frequency to half-hourly.

Left: Citaro 3905 (BU06 HSJ) in Hertford on 9 August, its third day in service. **ANDY HAMER**



NEWS IN BRIEF

New bus and coach registrations are 9.2% ahead of 2005, with 2,732 vehicles delivered by 31 July against 2,501 for the first seven months of 2005. Volvo remains market leader with 26.5% of sales (2005: 33.2%), followed by Alexander Dennis with 18.5% (2005: 16.7%), Scania with 11% (2005: 11.3%) and Optare with 10.6% (11.9%). The gap between Volvo and Alexander Dennis has narrowed from 413 to 219 vehicles. Scania delivered 20 more vehicles than a year ago, Optare only eight fewer.

Bournemouth Council has approved plans for a multi-screen cinema and restaurant complex on the site of the former bus and coach station, which was demolished in 1980 following a fire four years earlier.

Warrington interchange opens, double-deck services cut

Warrington's new bus interchange opened on 21 August, replacing the temporary facility used since the previous bus station closed in May last year to make way for an expanded shopping area.

In stark contrast to the pre-2005 bus station, the interchange has a light and airy concourse leading through automatic doors to 19 departure stands, two more than before. All departures are

displayed electronically in the entrance and at the far end of the interchange, where an escalator leads to the shopping area above. Each stand has its own

screen above the exit, detailing the current time and the time and destination of the next departure, while a second screen in each waiting area

announces the next four departures from that bay. Although not yet complete, remaining work at the interchange should be finished before the official opening in October.

Warrington Borough Transport, meantime, has cut its double-deck fleet from 35 to 30



Above: Warrington Borough Transport, Arriva and First vehicles using the new interchange. **Pictures by NICK THOMSON**



Left: Warrington 69 (H517 RWX), an ex-Blazefield Leyland Olympian with Northern Counties body, on the now withdrawn service 44.

vehicles following the loss of school contracts and has mothballed its ex-Arriva Leyland Olympians. Although the council-owned company continues to operate hourly over one-time North Western routes between Warrington and Northwich, it

withdrew the 43 via Barnton and 44 via Weaverham from 31 July and no longer provides extra peak positioning journeys with double-deckers. It also withdrew double-deck routes 37/47A and 234 between Warrington and Altrincham after 19 August.

Head abandonment sparks Peterborough bus war

Alec Head Coaches abandoned its Peterborough-Whittlesey service on 7 August, nine months after taking it over from Morley's of Whittlesey, prompting two other operators to compete for the business. A month earlier, Alec Head — which had branded several MCW Metrobus and Leyland Titan double-deckers for the service — cancelled several evening journeys. The move prompted Huntingdon & District to

provide additional Peterborough-Whittlesey short workings on its 337 between Peterborough, March and Chatteris. Judd's of Manea, which has connections with Emblings of Guyhirn, started its own Peterborough-Whittlesey service using the 701 route number that Alec Head carried over from Morley's. Initially, it used one bus, but the service increased to two buses from 21 August.

Newly restored Eastern Counties VR303 (LFS 303F), an 83-seat Bristol VRT/LL6G new to Eastern Scottish, operating Norwich city service 19 on 2 September as part of the 75th anniversary of the formation of the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company. **RUSSELL YOUNG**



Arriva to hold Metroliner farewell day

Arriva's Original London Sightseeing Tour is planning a last day of operation of its open-top MCW Metroliner coaches on 29 October. Following withdrawal of former City of Oxford ML17 on 28 July, former Shamrock & Rambler ML12 (A112 KFX) is the last open-top

Metroliner left in service. Arriva believes it was one of the first Metroliners that Ensignbus converted to open-top in the early 1990s for its London Pride fleet. During the last afternoon, an original specification covered top Metroliner will duplicate one of ML12's tours.

Below: Original London Sightseeing Tour Metroliner ML21 (B121 ORU) on Lambeth Bridge. **MARK LYONS**



Hants & Dorset book competition winners

The six winners of our August competition to win Ian Allan Publishing's new *Glory Days Hants & Dorset* book are: Raymond Barraclough of Bradford, T. Ford of Colchester, P. Gander of Crowborough, Vincent Harriman of Wolverhampton, E.J. Nurden of Newton Abbott and R. Smith of Morecambe. Congratulations for knowing that the correct answers were that Hants & Dorset took over King Alfred in 1973, that its buses were painted poppy red from 1972 and its last crew-operated bus was a Bristol Lodekka FL6G.

Routemaster in the Potteries

A new operator, RML Travel, began operating its first registered local bus route on 2 September, linking Hanley and Birches Head every 20min. It plans to operate service 40 using the unique John Worker ZigZag-

restyled Carlyle-bodied Dennis Dart, but its ex-London Routemaster, RML2327, operated for most of the first day. Here, it waits between journeys in a rainswept Hanley. Picture by RICHARD GODFREY



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Picture: KEVIN SMITH

Ultra-short Solo for Regal

One of the first 7.1m ultra-short Optare Solo SE midibuses has been supplied to Regal Coachways of Chelmsford for use on Essex County Council tendered services. Besides its short length, the M710 is also distinguished by a single-leaf passenger door. Unfortunately, its electronic destination has been programmed without the 'l' in 'Waltham'. Picture (right) By LEE WHITEHEAD



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Roger Bowker retires from Stagecoach

One of Stagecoach's longest serving senior managers, **Roger Bowker** (pictured), has retired. He is 65 and latterly was chief operating officer of the North East Region of Coach USA. He joined the group in 1994 when it acquired East London in the London Buses privatisation and later also took charge of the Selkent subsidiary when the two companies came into a single organisation.

His career of over 40 years began as a trainee with the Transport Holding Company's former Tilling Group, after which he specialised in schedules, traffic management and marketing in Greater Manchester from 1965 to 1980. He was appointed general manager with Rossendale Transport in 1980, took up a similar post at Eastbourne four years later and, as managing director, led the transformation of a council department into an arms' length company. He moved to East London when London Buses was split into 13 subsidiary companies.

Stagecoach moved him into international roles, first as chairman of Stagecoach Portugal, then managing Swebus, its Scandinavian business, from 1997 until it was sold three years later.

His railwayman son, **Richard Bowker**, is the new chief executive at the National Express Group.



Newport moves to Devon & Cornwall

Simon Newport (pictured) has transferred from First Bristol to become commercial director for First's bus operations in Devon and Cornwall.

He joined First's senior management training scheme in 1998 after graduating from the University of the West of England with a degree in town and country planning. As part of his training, he worked with First Manchester, Leicester and Bristol before becoming its Dorset area manager in 2000.

Speaking of his new role, where he rejoins Devon & Cornwall managing director **Marc Reddy**, he says: 'It will be extremely challenging, but I am excited about making a positive impact and helping the business to move forward.'



Glasgow bus historian Ron Logan dies

Ron Logan, a lifelong transport enthusiast and founder member of the Glasgow Transport Study Group, died suddenly on 23 July, exactly two weeks before his 75th birthday.

Having undertaken his national service in the Royal Air Force, he rejoined after a few years in commerce and progressed to become a squadron leader, before retiring to Wetherall, near Carlisle. He was a member of many transport societies and he and his wife Shirley helped staff many fund raising stalls over the years. His main interest was in buses, Scottish ones in particular, and above all in Glasgow Corporation Transport and his principal involvement in the GTSG was the compilation of the history of Glasgow Corporation bus services for inclusion in a comprehensive history.

Fellow member Brian Longworth says: 'Ron was very keen to share his knowledge with other enthusiasts. His main interests were in timetables and destination blinds and he had a comprehensive collection of both. He compiled destination lists and noted the various Glasgow display styles. Ron also liked to make his own miniature destination screens and boxes, many of which he gave away to friends. His own collection was kept in his shed, with the displays being changed regularly.'

Philip Kirk heads Go West Midlands

Oxford Bus Company managing director **Philip Kirk** has taken on the additional role of MD at Go West Midlands, the new name for the Birmingham Coach Company. His appointment follows the departure of **John Craggs**, who joined Go-Ahead when it acquired BCC last year. Oxford Bus Company operations director **Louisa Weeks** becomes director and general manager at Oxford, reporting directly to Philip Kirk.

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Stagecoach keeps eyes open for a return to Europe

Stagecoach chief executive Brian Souter says the group might return to mainland European bus operations if an opportunity arises.

Speaking at the annual meeting in August, he confirmed that the group is focusing on deregulated transport markets, making acquisitions most likely in North

America and the UK. But he told a shareholder that Stagecoach could return to Europe 'if we see a real opportunity'. Contrasting its approach with those of FirstGroup

and Arriva, he added: 'We're not actively pursuing an acquisition strategy in Europe, the way some companies are with Connexion in Holland, for example. That sort of thing holds no appeal for us.'

'However, we are interested in the deregulated parts of Europe, where the profits are greater, such as in Portugal and Finland.' It previously operated in Portugal from 1995 to 2001 and in Finland from 1996 to 1999. Talking of the recent sales of its buses in New Zealand and London, he commented: 'We are always looking for value for the shareholder and we don't like regulated markets, which lead to a squeeze on profits.'



Left: As reported in August 'Global News', Stagecoach plans to operate new amphibious buses on tours of New York, using vehicles similar to these purpose-built examples that Toronto Hippo Tours operates in Canada. **MIKE HADDON**

Ridership up ahead of Stockholm road toll vote

Storstockholms Lokaltrafik (SL), the greater Stockholm transport authority, says bus ridership rose by 4.5% during a six-month road-pricing experiment, which ended on 31 July.

Residents in the Swedish capital city (population 800,000) will decide the future of the London-style congestion charge in

a referendum on 17 September, the same day as national and local elections. A survey in the local *Dagens Nyheter* newspaper shows that 51% of Stockholmers favour the traffic tolls being made permanent. Preliminary figures show a 25% fall — exceeding expectations — in the number of cars passing through central

Stockholm during the trial, with a corresponding decrease in emissions.

Before the £2.7million government-funded scheme began, SL drafted in hundreds of new buses — mainly low-floor articulated Volvos and Scania — to provide 100,000 extra seats in the system.

German privatisation goes ahead

The south-west German city of Pforzheim has sold 51% of the municipal SVP undertaking to the French Veolia group after the country's first ever referendum on public transport privatisation went against a local pressure group opposed to the deal (Global News, June). The campaigners failed to mobilise enough support to halt the sale of the 80-vehicle operation, which lost £3.9million last year. Veolia will run services in the city until 2016. Pforzheim is the first German municipality to privatise its bus services.

Biggest-yet Swiss tenders invited

The eastern Swiss canton of St Gall and the Federal Ministry of Transport have issued tenders for 17 bus routes — 15 run currently run by Postauto, the national carrier and its subcontractors, the remainder managed by a private operator. They hope this will improve the quality and reduce the cost of public transport in the Sarganserland, which borders with Austria.

This is the largest number of routes put out to tender since the introduction of more liberal legislation in 1996. By Swiss

standards, the annual mileage of about 1million km is fair sized.

The winning bid should be known by the end of this year, with a net contract awarded initially for four years starting at the end of 2007 with an optional six-year extension. Penalties of up to £100,000 will be incurred if quality standards are not met. In order to restrict participants from abroad, certain requirements set in the tender weigh the cost by 50%.

While the amount quoted will have to be guaranteed for two years, compensation can be

claimed if inflation, social costs or fuel prices rise 'massively' in later years. Bus drivers employed by the current operator have to be offered jobs by the new operator. Salaries must correspond to customary levels with a minimum being set.

Buses will be transferred to the new operator at a price set in the legislation governing such takeovers, but they may be used on other routes. Whereas the vehicles must wear a uniform livery, the canton does not inhibit the actual design.

NABI buys Optima Bus

North American Bus Industries — former owner of Optare and itself now owned by Cerberus Capital Management of New York — has acquired Wichita, Kansas-based Optima Bus Corporation, the midibus and replica streetcar manufacturer that has a joint venture with the Wright Group. Before parting company with Optare, NABI sold an adapted Solo to US customers seeking midibuses.

Trams to replace Innsbruck trolleybuses

IVB, the municipal undertaking in the Austrian city of Innsbruck, is to replace its trolleybus system with new low-floor trams next February, 19 years after the electric service was reintroduced on environmental grounds.

'We opted to bring the closure a year forward after vehicle testers discovered that the buses had suffered serious corrosion damage,' IVB director Martin Baltes told *Buses*. Despite criticism from some local politicians, who accuse IVB of riding roughshod over ecological arguments in favour of trolleys, he says the decision was taken on purely economic grounds. 'We are a small city with 120,000 inhabitants and we simply cannot afford to retain workshop and maintenance facilities for three modes of public transport — trolleys, diesel buses and trams.'

The sole remaining trolley service, 5.2km east-west cross-city route O, carries 11.3million passengers a year, but its popularity was insufficient to persuade the IVB supervisory board to change its mind. 'Trolleybus capacity was insufficient to cope with traffic at

peak times and we would have had to invest in double artic. Trams are a more viable alternative,' says Martin Baltes.

The route was badly disrupted by roadworks throughout July although scheduled weekday services resumed in early August and will continue until closure. They will be worked by Innsbruck's remaining 10 Gräf & Stift-badged MAN articulated trolleybuses. These 1992 vehicles have been earmarked for sale to eastern Europe. The last eight high-floor artics left for the Bulgarian capital, Sofia, in July. Innsbruck also hopes to find a buyer for all of its overhead and signalling equipment.

Unlike Salzburg, which has been expanding one of western Europe's largest systems, Innsbruck has been lukewarm about trolleybuses in recent years. The first ran there from 1944 to 1976 and in a surprise about-turn, a service restarted in 1988, replacing diesel buses. Linz in northern Austria also maintains a four-route trolley network, while a three-route interurban system operates around Kapfenburg in the south-east.



Above: Innsbruck 819, a Gräf & Stift GE150M18 low-floor articulated trolley, at the combined trolleybus, bus and tram stop at the Marktplatz in February 1996. **MURDOCH CURRIE**



Above: Trolleybuses continue in Linz, where this low-floor Volvo B10LA-based artic was outside the main railway station in July. **DUNCAN ANDERSON**

Swedes ponder interurban trolley link

A 20km trolleybus link is being proposed for the growing traffic needs between the Swedish cities of Falun and Borlänge. It would run through the centres of each city and provide a fast and environmentally attractive link between and within the cities.

The £100million-plus cost of a proposed new electric commuter train link, as well as the fact that the rail stations are not in the city centres, makes this cheaper transport alternative, using existing roads, appear feasible.

Sweden's only trolleybus operation is the three-vehicle

Arriva-operated rail-feeder service introduced in Landskrona in 2003. As reported last month, the longest surviving Scandinavian trolleybus system is in Bergen, Norway, where local authority-owned Gaia Trafik has become part of the new 1,040-vehicle Tide undertaking. It has only six MAN-badged Neoplan articulated trolleys for the 10-vehicle, 7km route, but trolleybus use could expand with the opening of a long planned new tramway, on which construction starts this year.

Below: One of Tide's MAN-badged Neoplans in pedestrianised central Bergen. **ROGER DAVIES**



Lausanne begs and borrows to maintain service



An ex-Geneva Saurer, operating as Lausanne 885, with Vevey-Montreux Van Hool No.8 (Lausanne 541) behind, at the Lutry terminus of route 9. PETER WILLIAMS

To overcome the shortage of trolleybuses caused by the return of its 26 ill-fated Neoplan duo-mode vehicles to the manufacturer (Global News, May), Lausanne transport undertaking TL has sought help from other Swiss operators.

It has acquired 10 Hess-bodied Saurer GT560 44-seat articulated trolleys from Geneva. They were new in

1982/83 and became surplus following the recent arrival of new vehicles. It also has borrowed five 1995-built Van Hool AG300T artics from the neighbouring Vevey-Montreux system. The Neoplan N6121s are being exchanged for 22 diesel artics following the loss of two others in fires, and TL expects 13 new Hess trolleys next year.



Take twice a day . . . and what will happen?

The former TfL chief's television programme shone much heat and a little light on why the UK is failing to improve public transport and reduce car-generated traffic congestion

Irarely watch television, though I am happy to sit down to an episode of *Inspector Morse* or perhaps take in a feature length *Cracker* or *Prime Suspect* — even if they are repeats — but I make strenuous efforts to avoid the likes of *Big Brother* and *Love Island*. So it was with some surprise that I found myself watching a little reality TV of a different kind a few Mondays ago.

My son rang me to check if I knew that Bob Kiley, Transport for London's semi-retired former commissioner, was appearing on Channel 4 in a programme called *Dispatches* — *Britain's Commuter Nightmare*. I did not, so I missed the first 10min but the remaining 50min made good viewing.

Bob Kiley is, of course, an American and my initial reaction five years ago on hearing the news of his appointment as TfL supremo was to wonder why Mayor Livingstone would want someone from the land of unbridled motorcar use to run the show in London. But it soon became clear that Ken's plan was to get a seasoned transport professional with a good track record in significantly improving metro systems (Boston and New York) and who might, just might, help him win the battle to stop the imposition of the so-called PPP (public-private partnership) as the government's chosen method of renewing the London Underground.

That battle was ultimately lost, but the team of Ken and Bob did manage to score some significant victories in terms of secure funding for TfL's capital programmes, and the mayor's first transport commissioner was responsible for the successful introduction of the congestion charge.

Now, it is this that Bob was promoting in the Channel 4 programme as the answer to many a maiden's prayer, and he went off to Edinburgh to find out why the good citizens of the Scottish capital had rejected the idea. You could say it was all about turkeys not voting for Christmas, but I venture to suggest it was as much about the British not being responsible enough to vote in a referendum of any kind. Such things work in Switzerland, where the people have a lot of say in how the government spends *their* money, but in dear old Blighty we suffer from the most centralist regime outside Bulgaria — and even that fine country is now more devolved than we are. So pretty well any proposition Joe Public is invited to vote on will result in the proposer getting a good kicking.

Silence from the Chancellor

As everyone knows, in the UK nothing meaningful can be done by city or county councils without the blessing of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Bob Kiley poignantly mentioned that he had never been able to meet Gordon Brown. Staggering, isn't it, that the head of the country's most important transport organisation — faced with implementing an untried concept devised entirely by Treasury mandarins — never got to meet his funder-in-chief a few streets away? That would be unthinkable in Amsterdam, Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Madrid, Paris, Rome or Vienna.

The rest of the *Dispatches* programme took a tilt at the flawed railway privatisation of the Major government and the failure of New Labour to do much to improve matters,

as well as focusing on the loss of the integrated network (and a third of the public transport ridership) in Tyne & Wear since bus deregulation 20 years ago.

Quite rightly, Bob looked to a pretty bleak future in our cities with the unchecked growth in traffic and mounting congestion. He clearly believes that congestion charging or road pricing is an essential part of the solution to the problem, but I am not so sure. It was, I think, a pity that he did not explain the various methods of raising funds locally in the USA that benefit public transport development. Small percentage uplifts in local sales taxes make significant sums available and this sort of fiscal measure might be a better bet than something the Jeremy Clarkson fraternity can dismiss as another tax on the motorist.

The programme also considered how we might get more people to use the bus and early footage of the 'ftr' in York was shown, though there was no mention of light rail, which has underpinned all the modal split changes in public transport's favour over the past 25 years in Bob Kiley's homeland.

Congestion is out of control

At the end, the strong impression given was that congestion in UK cities is out of control and that action must be taken now to avoid total gridlock in just a few years' time. It would have been nice to see some comparisons with mainland European countries where there are many vibrant cities with virtually no traffic congestion because there is much higher public transport use, but the programme failed to consider much in the way of proven solutions.

You could, I suppose, say that such a programme — fronted by an American — was unlikely to explore much beyond the English-speaking world and the two nations bound together by the 'special relationship'. After all, our US cousins have taught us how to move towards gridlock and we've done a jolly good job in learning from them.

Oh, by the way, 'Take twice a day . . .'? That memorable slogan used to adorn all the trolleybuses (trolleycoaches in US-speak) in Seattle. 'Take twice a day to relieve congestion'. Simple, isn't it?

Left: Might sales taxes deliver UK cities quality congestion-busting public transport solutions like the Twisto system in the northern French port of Caen? The rubber-tyred Bombardier vehicles are a cross between a guided trolleybus and a tram and, because they are guided by the rail in the centre of the road and stop at purpose-designed level halts, they provide a fast, attractive alternative to the private car.

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Olympians finally bow out as the 84 goes single-deck



Left: Metroline Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympian AV28 (S128 RLE) at its St Albans terminus shortly before the route reverted to single-deckers. The Pointer Dart behind is an ex-Sovereign example in the Centrebus fleet. **TOM GRAHAM**

Many longer London bus routes combine two or even three shorter routes put together for operational convenience or economy. But the 84 (New Barnet-St Albans) — operated by Metroline and one of the last bastions of step-entrance double-deckers — is different. It is also one of London's oldest routes surviving in recognisable form, having originated as a Golders Green-St Albans service in 1912.

Since then it has seen numerous changes, particularly at its southern end. But for a route that starts in suburban London, it still runs a long way beyond and indeed Potters Bar garage, which works it, is itself outside the Transport for London area. The route carries a considerable number of medium-distance passengers, and even at its major intermediate point — Potters Bar — you do not find everybody getting off and a completely fresh set of passengers getting on. St Albans is also a popular destination for day-trippers and day return tickets are available,

It runs under a London Local Service Agreement and is not a tendered route. Routes run on this basis accept TfL tickets and charge TfL fares with the TfL area, whereas a few other routes operate into the area under a London Service Permit agreement. These latter do not accept TfL tickets, an example being the 409 (Croydon-East Grinstead) which this April changed operator from Metrobus to Southdown PSV and at the same time went from LLSA to LSP status, to the annoyance of some users.

The 14 remaining LLSA routes are regarded as an integral part of London operations and consequently must now be operated using low-floor buses. So Metroline has replaced the Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympians on the 84 with seven single-door Dart SLFs bought originally by F. E. Thorpe for route 705, the ill-fated inter-station service withdrawn last year. They seat only 31 (with lots of wheelchair space) and it will be interesting to see if they

offer sufficient capacity, since a previous use of step-entrance Darts on the 84 failed for this reason. A few rides on the 84 just before the changeover showed the 1hr timing for end-to-end runs was quite tight, and many more cash-paying riders than on a TfL tendered route.

The imposition of restrictions on buses coming into the London area is nothing new. Even before London Transport was formed in 1933, some operators chose to keep just outside, an example being with services to Staines that terminated on the Surrey side of Staines Bridge, leaving their passengers to walk the rest of the way. If the buses had crossed the bridge, they would have come into the Metropolitan Police area, and that would have meant complying with the conditions, some of them peculiar, imposed by the Public Carriage Office. That covered items as diverse as frequency of overhaul periods or seating layouts, and until a few years earlier had banned windscreens on drivers' cabs.

If the 84, in one form or other, has proved itself a survivor, so has the garage that operates it. In the mid-to-late-1930s, LT top brass was concerned that Potters Bar was too far north of much of the system, and crew rostering was not as economical as it should have been. When the Greater London Council took over only the red bus operations of LT in 1969, the garage again looked vulnerable and later lost the 84 to London Country for a period. This was when other London garages such as Loughton went to the wall. Just as Potters Bar was in Hertfordshire, so Loughton was in Essex and both came under threat from county council tendering processes and greater competition.

The resourceful staff at Potters Bar helped it survive. Today, it needs nearly 90 buses for TfL routes, mainly double-deckers, plus another 10 or so for the 84 and one outside London route. Yet none of the TfL routes is on its doorstep.



Left: Travel London extended Walton-on-Thames local service 564 (Whiteley Village-Vicarage Fields) from 14 August to the Xcel Leisure Complex, which is funding an evening and Sunday service. S244 (YT51 EBA) is one of the Byfleet-based Optare Solos repainted in the National Express subsidiary's half-red/half-white Surrey livery for this route. **GEOFF RIXON**

Terminal change allows artics to change hands

I have written before about the lack of flexibility of non-standard or specialised vehicles, such as the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter minibuses used on the 395 (Surrey Docks Quays-Rotherhithe Tunnel-Limehouse), until the route was withdrawn earlier this year. However, while one could not describe the articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaro as non-standard or rare, there are only 387 across all the London fleets and they are, of course, route-bound.

Not long after route 25 (Oxford Circus-Ilford) was converted to artics operated by Stagecoach East London, there was an urgent need to add more buses to the route. This was done by reducing the frequency on another artic route, Stagecoach Selkent's 453 (Marylebone-Deptford). To maintain an even headway, overlapping double-deck route 53 was also reduced in frequency so that an even headway was maintained on the main part of both routes. At the same time, another route was extended over the busiest part of both to compensate.

Ever since the 453 began, its buses have had a long run out of service from Deptford Bridge to Lewisham, the nearest suitable layover point — and even there they couldn't use Lewisham bus station because there was no spare capacity there. At the time, I was told that there had been a misunderstanding with the owner of a nearby site at Deptford over how soon access was needed. Whatever the reason, it resulted in the temporary but time consuming and expensive (in terms of wages and buses)



Above: Selkent articulated Citaro 23027 (LX03 HBL) — then still carrying Stagecoach fleetnames — crossing Piccadilly Circus as a southbound 453 on 23 June. **MARK LYONS**

extension to Lewisham and buses went somewhere else in the evenings, as the location there isn't desirable for drivers on their meal reliefs.

At long last, the buses are likely to be able to lay over at Deptford Bridge Docklands Light Railway station. I say 'likely' because the plan has been deferred several times already, previous dates unfulfilled this year being 29 April, 17 June and 5 August.

However, the change is important because the buses saved will be transferred to First CentreWest's route 18 (Euston-Sudbury), which goes up from a 6min to a 5min weekday frequency. Anyone who uses the 18 will say the increase is needed. But the change is — or will be — unusual as the vehicles will transfer from one operator to another in a different group, something that seldom happens to modern buses in London.

Enviro400 shows rivals lacking in seats downstairs

I was pleased to see (pictured last month) that Volvo has been quick off the mark in getting a Euro4-engined double-decker — the B9TL — into service in London. It is running with London General, in theory at least on the

11 (Liverpool Street-Fulham Broadway), and has the usual distinctive Wright Eclipse Gemini body.

No doubt its lower emission levels (as on every Euro4 engine) will be welcomed by

those who understand such things. The only external feature that is different is the second fuel filler behind the driver's cab, which is for the AdBlue additive. But I and maybe some passengers are less impressed by the low number of seats downstairs. I know this dual-door bus is only 10.1m long and has a wheelchair space with no tip-up seats. Even so, 21 is a poor figure, even if an improvement on the 17 seats (instead of 21 with tip-ups) that is now all you can find on many London double-deckers.

But those new Alexander Dennis Enviro400s with London Central, London General and Metroline all seat 26 downstairs in the same length. That's a huge improvement. Selkent has a modest 10 similar new Enviro400s on order for the 61 (Bromley North-Chislehurst), while Travel London — previously a strong supporter of Volvos — expects 27 similar buses, so Volvo and newcomer MAN will need something good to equal it. Of course, existing Scania/East Lancs OmniDekkas seat 26 downstairs in a vehicle just 600mm longer, but knee room and headroom at the rear are pretty tight and could do with improving.



Left: London Central E20 (LX06 E2P), one of the Cummins ISBe4 Euro4-engined Alexander Dennis Enviro400s operated on route 37 (Peckham-Putney). **MARK LYONS**

Free children's bus travel may be taking kids off trains

Surprisingly little has been written or heard about the effects of free travel for under-16s introduced a year ago on London buses, or its extension to under-18s this September. The increase in the number of schoolbus routes (those numbered in the 600s) has been modest, while the odd additional journey or two at school times has been added to a few normal routes.

About the only one that gained much notice was on the 142 (Watford Junction-Brent Cross) where Arriva the Shires & Essex hastily put on an Arriva aquamarine-liveried Dennis Trident as an additional bus in September last year. Not until early this year was it able to find a spare red low-floor double-decker — an Alexander-bodied DAF DB250 — to replace it. Examples of schooldays-only improvements to existing routes this September include extra journeys on the 57 (Kingston-Clapham Park) and K3 (Kingston-Esher), both incidentally operated by Transdev (formerly London United).

Perhaps suffering in silence, some suburban railways have lost young passengers since the free travel scheme began. Morning peak trains on some lines see far fewer children on them. One available statistic reveals a noticeable drop in the number of young males in the London area taking the car-driving test, apparently because of its increasing cost and complexity. That's certainly good for bus usage in the immediate future, but it could also mean that, in a few years' time, fewer young people with car driving licences will want to become bus drivers.

Musical chairs continue on schoolbus contracts. In the latest tender awards, First London has lost the single-deck 648 (now Cranham-Romford Market) to Blue Triangle, which will use new single-deckers, while Blue Triangle has lost the double-deck 652 (Rainham-Upminster) to First London. Also, First London won the 679 (Woodford Wells-Goodmayes) from Arriva London, again continuing to use double-deckers. In addition, East London has won the contract for new one-bus double-deck route 608 (Gallows Corner-Brentwood-Shenfield High School), introduced at fairly short notice to replace First Essex route 851, withdrawn at the end of July.

At long last there has been a change to contracts for school routes generally. They will now run from September to the end of July each year, which is entirely logical. They were varied before, with some, for example, running to the end of September.

Right: Besides using its own vehicles, Blue Triangle has been hiring other historic London buses for its Sunday heritage services in Essex. One of the more colourful examples is former RTW178 (KLB 908), an all-Leyland Titan PD2 6RT preserved as Stevenson's of Utoxeter No.11 complete with platform doors. The location is Little Dunmow and the date was 6 August.

RICHARD GODFREY

New names, new operating methods?

On opening a new Surrey County Council timetable book, I was momentarily surprised to see the operator of one route listed just as Transdev. Subsequent investigation showed that all former London United routes are now so listed, and indeed that is the name used in the latest official London bus maps.

You and I know who Transdev is, but I wonder how bewildered it leaves the average passenger. Same buses, same drivers, but unless you notice the actual fleetname, there's nothing different, and equally no notices explaining the change. Depending on one's viewpoint, one either regards such changes as a reflection of reality or a form of corporate vanity. A fleetname like First London at least gives some sort of local identity, but Transdev could be anywhere in the world . . . like Bournemouth, Burnley or Berlin.

I always thought the addition of the words Go-Ahead to the sides of London Central, London General or Metrobus buses was a bit foolish, as it didn't offer any explanation of what that meant. Now, however, the sides of the buses proclaim 'part of the Go-Ahead Group', which seems much more sensible.

Macquarie, which bought East London and Selkent from Stagecoach, doesn't intend to stick its name to the sides of its buses. And we have yet to learn what, if any, changes will be made to these companies. However, at a more practical level, Macquarie could pay more attention to and put a little more money into Selkent. It has always seemed to me to be the poorer relation of the two with, for example, a very low holding of spare buses against scheduled requirements compared to East London. That might make some figures look right, but it doesn't do much for staff morale, apart from anything else.



Above: Another change of name on a Surrey County Council-supported route on the London fringes was on twice-daily weekday service 416 (Stanwell Moor-Kingston), with Wiltax taking over on 31 July from Timetrak, which ceased trading the previous Friday. LA1 (WLT 881), an ex-Armchair Leyland Olympian with lowheight Alexander RL-type body, carries destination details in the top of the nearside windscreen. **GEOFF RIXON**



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Whatever happened to...? ...Kelvin Scottish Omnibuses

To mark the 20th anniversary of bus deregulation, on 26 October 1986, I looked back to *Buses* of that month and found a profile, by Maxwell Fowler, of Kelvin Scottish Omnibuses, a new Scottish Bus Group company set up to compete with Strathclyde Buses in Glasgow.

As he recalls on p24 this month, *Buses* columnist Brian Cox was general manager there, running the largest of four new SBG companies created in June 1985. Kelvin — named after a north Glasgow river — was an uneasy jigsaw of bits of three pre-1985 SBG companies. Mostly ex-Alexander (Midland), it included Central SMT's Dunbartonshire services and what until early 1985 had been the Eastern Scottish services in Glasgow's East End.

Three old cultures brought an alarmingly varied fleet, exemplified by the newest double-deckers — Midland Metrobuses, Central Dominators and Eastern Olympians; it soon added ex-

London Routemasters, new minibuses and swapped high-floor single-deckers for other SBG fleets' Leyland Nationals. In place of Midland blue, Central red and Eastern green liveries (all relieved by cream), it selected two-tone blue, soon adding yellow fronts, which were later incorporated into something more co-ordinated.

Historic engineering problems held Kelvin back from realising its dreams, and a succession of economies and depot closures began from 1987, as Brian Cox left for Stagecoach. In 1989, as SBG prepared for privatisation, Kelvin was merged with the remainder of Central Scottish to form Kelvin Central Buses and adopted a red and cream livery. By then running 492 buses, it was sold in February 1991 to its management and employees, who then sold out to Strathclyde Buses in October 1994. The remnants live on as First Glasgow (No.2) Ltd, operating 330 buses from depots in Motherwell, Cumbernauld and Dumbarton.

SHELTER WITH A PANORAMIC VIEW



As the grandson of a Lanarkshire painter and decorator whose company once got away with repainting only the sides of many of the county's bus shelters when they changed colour, I shouldn't be surprised by what happens on any shelter's roof — like Matthew Woolf's revelation of penthouse waiting facilities for the upwardly mobile bus riders of Maidenhead.

If you thought that our poking of fun at eccentric bus stops was mere self-indulgence, read on. Remember the bus shelter in August 'Tales', the Centro facility that Tony Hunter found plonked on a Kassel kerb, forcing passengers to step out on to the road to board their nice new low-floor buses? A few weeks ago, I had a call from Lisa Innes, Centro's contracts

supervisor. If I could tell her where it is (it was the junction of Churchill and Attlee Roads in Walsall — the Premier Estate, perhaps?), she would have it moved.

Less than 24hr later, she reported: 'I have located the shelter and have arranged for my contractors to attend site and remove the 4.5m cantilever and replace it with a 3m cantilever, which was originally supposed to be erected back in February 2006.' Tony confirms it was all sorted by 11.30 the next day. All in a day's work for *Buses*.

Perhaps her equivalent on Teesside might like to know about the isolated Kassel kerb below that John Lowe has photographed in Ingleby Barwick, on a 40mph spine road with neither pavement nor drop kerbs alongside. He says you might die in the attempt to reach the stop, but once there it will be a doddle stepping on to a low-floor bus.



Below: The beginning and end of Kelvin. Ex-Midland Alexander-bodied Leyland Fleetline in August 1985, in a version of the original livery. And a March 1993 view of Kelvin Central 1781 (PHY 695S), an ECW-bodied Bristol VRT new to Bristol Omnibus Company.



20 YEARS AGO

October 1986 again and *Buses* brought news of the first National Bus Company operating subsidiary to be privatised.

'Devon General was sold to its management team, led by managing director Harry Blundred, on 19 August,' we reported, adding: 'As recorded last month, National Holidays has already been sold to the Pleasurama Group [owner of Shearings] for £2.3million, but Devon General is the first actual operating company to be sold.' It

had 400 buses, around half of them minibuses with 43 more on order, and over 1,000 staff. It emerged later that Devon General went for £3.4million — near the top end of the scale of prices paid for NBC companies.

Harry Blundred, who led the company until he sold out to Stagecoach 10 years later, began his bus industry career 24 years earlier as a conductor with PMT and took charge at Devon General following the break-up of Western National in 1983.



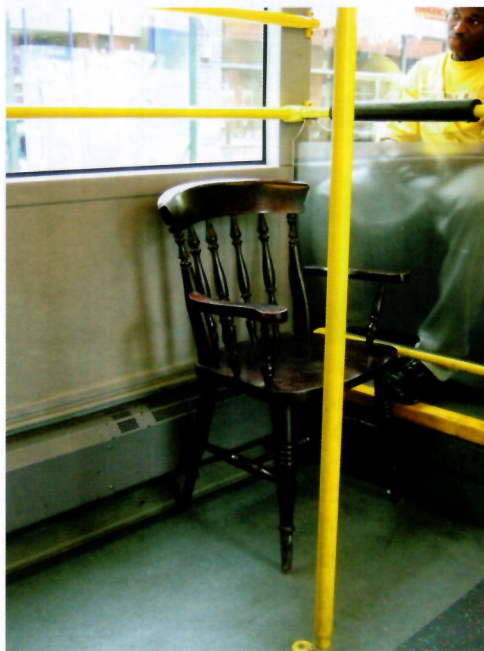
Left: Devon General Ford Transit minibus 522 (C522 FFJ) and Bristol VR 618 (UTO 834S) in Torquay five days before the company was sold. **GRAHAM WISE**

DON'T ADAM AND EVE THAT ONE

In my item in last month's Tales about the sale of Stagecoach London, I mistakenly equated the price Macquarie Bank is paying for the business to around three years' profits on those routes. While the London

business has generated good profits, £263million over three years would be wildly excessive. The three years refers to Stagecoach UK Bus profits over that period, which are still impressively healthy.

BRING YOUR OWN CHAIR IF YOU RIDE BY BENDY



Barry Le Jeune snapped this extra seat aboard a London Central articulated Citaro on route 436. With only 49 seats provided, did a reluctant standee decide to carry his own with him? Or was a furniture shopper so distracted by the bellows that he (or she) left it behind to become yet another extraordinary item washed up in Transport for London's Baker Street lost property office?

OBVIOUS STATEMENT OF THE MONTH



Our Corgi Original Omnibus Company diecast model — for sending me an offbeat bus picture — goes this month to Basil Hancock in Australia for drawing my attention to one of the most pointless notices yet seen on a bus.



Surely State Transport drivers in Sydney don't really need to be advised against accessing their buses through the signaling window, but Basil tells me every bus in the fleet carries this sign. As he says, it must have taken a most bizarre incident — or a risk assessor's fevered imagination — to prompt such a warning. What next? Don't leave bus through the floor hatch?

Keep your eyes open and camera ready for your own offbeat colour picture opportunities and send the results to me at the **Leven address**. You, too, could win a Corgi diecast.

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Right: Deregulation in the raw in Sheffield around 1992. Two Yorkshire Terrier Leyland Nationals effectively impede progress of three following Mainline double-deckers and another Leyland National in the South Riding fleet. As the market settled down, Traction Group acquired both Terrier and South Riding, while Mainline has been transformed into First South Yorkshire. **LEE WHITEHEAD**



BRIAN COX, a senior bus industry manager throughout the deregulation era, looks back 20 years, pinpoints the weaknesses and suggests how things might change

It seems like only yesterday

Can it really be 20 years since bus deregulation was introduced? It seems like yesterday, although deregulation and the years leading up to it represent half a career for those who have been involved throughout, and no manager younger than about 40 will have known anything different.

Yet the consequences of the 1985 Transport Act cause it to remain one of the most controversial measures enacted by any recent government — at least in the eyes of those involved in the business. We all know that buses aren't of much interest to policy makers compared with big-ticket items such as education, health and crime, which is perhaps why the arguments have been left to rumble round the industry for so long without any further changes of consequence being made to its structure. This could soon change, however, as seems to happen about every 20 years.

It's perhaps instructive to consider the

parallels between buses and railways, whose own revolution started 10 years later than that of buses. After nearly 10 years of railway upheaval — worse, surely, than anything caused by bus deregulation — there seems to be fairly general consensus that stability is now the number one priority, even if it means putting on hold major issues such as the desire in many quarters for an integrated railway.

After 10 years of bus deregulation, a similar consensus had to an extent already taken hold: now, 10 years farther on, such consensus as there was has broken down and the pressure for further structural change has increased. I wouldn't be surprised to find that railways turn out to be governed by the same 20-year cycle, and in 10 years' time perhaps we will even see the integrated railway reborn. The drivers for change will be the same: a realisation, after years of upheaval followed by a settling down period, that neither buses nor trains can achieve

their full potential within the existing institutional structure — with the problems in both cases exacerbated by cash pressures.

It's interesting too, in this context, to re-read Stephen Morris's contribution to the special *Buses Focus* issue of autumn 1996 devoted to the first 10 years of deregulation, to which I am indebted for jogging my memory about some of the events of those early years. At the end of a very even-handed review, he concluded that things were settling down, but that there was still much ground to make up. He talked about the need not only for stability, but also for quality in order to compete with the private car. He anticipated change, irrespective of the outcome of the forthcoming election (which of course brought Labour back to power), and 'more than likely a move away from the freedom for all envisaged by Mr Ridley. But,' he went on, 'it's a fair bet that whoever gets into power next time, we won't see a return to regulated services again.' The only thing Stephen didn't seem to foresee was how ineffective that next government's transport policy would turn out to be.

Remembering D-Day

My own recollections of 20 years of deregulation inevitably focus most strongly on the years of upheaval, and particularly on the very early days in Glasgow, where I was working at the time for Kelvin Scottish. No waiting until 26 October there. D-Day was 31 August 1986, eight weeks ahead of the rest of Britain. The Scottish traffic



Left: Recalling Brian Cox's own D-Day experiences, Kelvin Scottish Routemaster RM 2035 plies cross-Glasgow route 5 on 1 November 1986. **IAIN MacGREGOR**

commissioner seems to have taken one look at the long list of registrations and concluded that as everyone seemed so keen — if not, indeed, raving mad — they might as well get on with it as soon as possible (the earlier date also fitted in with the start of the new Strathclyde school term).

As I write, I have beside me a souvenir from those extraordinary days, the special edition of *Notices and Proceedings*, for registrations received by 28 February 1986 for the Strathclyde Region, No.1299, 27 March 1986. This was the document that first told the wider world of the large-scale bus war that was about to be unleashed between the local Scottish Bus Group companies (mainly by Clydeside and Kelvin) and Strathclyde Buses, the then PTE-owned bus company.

Skimming through the long list of registrations 20 years later, one's eye cannot help but fall on entries such as service registration No.0001476, on p44: Kelvin Scottish Omnibuses Ltd ... will run a service from Old Kilpatrick (Depot) or Fairley (Fairley Road turning circle) to Easterhouse (Lochdochart Road turning area) via Clydebank, City Centre, Carntyne or Shettleston. Name or No. 5/5A ... 5, 10min. frequency, double-deck. Before long it became generally known that those double-decks (and

for several other new services) were to be ex-LT Routemasters — 37 (44 with spares) to cover service 5/5A alone — and soon lines of RMs were to be seen making their way sedately up the M6 en route to both Kelvin and Clydeside.

And so the Glasgow bus wars were set in motion. For many people, pictures of wall-to-wall buses in Hope and Renfield Streets were the enduring image of the early days of deregulation — and its evils. How and why did we get there, and were the results worth the resulting upheaval?

Well, according to the Tabloid Theory of Deregulation, we got there because of Cecil Parkinson's affair with his secretary: this caused a Cabinet reshuffle, which led to Nicholas Ridley's arrival at the Department of Transport, or whatever it was called then. Proponents of this theory believe that if Tom King had stayed at Transport — or, indeed, if *anyone* other than Ridley had arrived — a less extreme reform would have resulted. I guess we'll never know for sure, but King's team were thought to be 'liberalisers' more than outright free marketeers, and it is possible that some form of franchising might have resulted had Ridley not appeared — although we perhaps shouldn't underestimate the Tory government's dislike

of the trade unions, Ken Livingstone's Greater London Council, and the metropolitan counties (especially South Yorkshire with its low fares policy), or the perceived success of the deregulation of coach services following the 1980 Act.

So many unanswered 'what if?' questions

While the 1980 Act did not generate major new long-term entrants with the notable exception of Stagecoach, it did significantly force up the standards of the main incumbents (National Express and the Scottish Bus Group), and this naturally influenced government thinking. The local bus service deregulation trial areas turned out to be pretty irrelevant however, as they were all deeply rural in nature. Perhaps the biggest 'what-if?' of the 1980s was what would have happened if, say, Glasgow and Manchester had been chosen as trial areas rather than Hereford, Norfolk and Devon.

It may seem hard to believe now, but most bus operators, too, were against Ridley's proposals, preferring a quiet life, although as always it is hard to sort out the impact of deregulation from that of privatisation. I and others felt — more so perhaps with hindsight — that the industry should have been privatised first, with deregulation following later. It can be argued, of course, that giving incumbent operators more time to get their houses in order would have made it harder for new entrants to establish themselves. Stagecoach, for example, would surely have found it much more difficult to establish its new Magicbus brand in Glasgow had the incumbent operators not had their hands full fighting each other. This would have been a great pity: watching Brian Souter and his colleagues drum up Castlemilk traffic outside St Enoch Square bus station (to which Magicbus had been denied access) is another of my lasting memories of those early days — and was a significant factor in my decision to join Stagecoach in 1987.

I believe, however, that much of the damaging instability of those early years would have been avoided if privatisation and deregulation had been separated — especially if the whole industry had been privatised, rather than leaving some municipal companies in the public sector, which led to further instability. It would also

Below: Bus deregulation was first put to the test in Herefordshire as a trial area following the 1980 Transport Act. Typical of services there in April 1988, Primrose of Leominster was operating these departures for Kington and Hereford using an ex-Crosville Leyland Leopard with Willowbrook 003 body and a Plaxton Supreme-bodied Bedford PJK. The county council has since helped fund the conversion of many rural services to operation by new low-floor buses. **ALAN MILLAR**



Left: The long drawn-out privatisation of municipal bus operations began in 1985 when Stevensons of Uttoxeter took over the East Staffordshire undertaking in Burton upon Trent. In August 1987, Stevensons also acquired a stake in Midland Fox when it was sold in the NBC privatisation programme. Four months earlier, Stevensons ex-London Fleetline THM 716M and a Midland Fox Ford Transit minibus compete for passengers. Today, both fleets are part of Arriva Midlands. **ADRIAN PEARSON**



Left and below: The more positive changes of the past 20 years are exemplified by two buses numbered 633 in what today is Trent Barton. Today, this combined business is recognised as an industry leader with individually branded, high frequency routes and a commitment to customer service. Wright Solar-bodied Scania L94UB 633 (FJ03 VXA) is dedicated to the short Derby-Spondon Flyer service that succeeded in attracting commuters out of their cars. The old established business running Plaxton Paramount-bodied DAF MB230 633 (C633 PAU) through Doncaster in 1987 — Barton Transport — sold out two years later to privatised ex-NBC Trent. **ALAN MILLAR/J. MILNES**

have avoided the waste of taxpayers' money that resulted from still publicly owned companies battling each other for territory.

Where were the quality standards?

For me, the other main weakness of the 1985 Act was the failure to establish much higher quality standards. In the early 1990s, when I was at Stagecoach South, I used to stand by the Market Cross in the semi-pedestrianised centre of Chichester, watching all the good achieved by Coastline's new fleet of Darts undone by unpleasant fumes from the vehicles of a well-known local independent operator of the time. This problem is still with us: I mentioned in my Inside Track column last month that Cambridgeshire County Council may have a hard task in establishing and maintaining the standards necessary to make the St Ives busway a complete success.

In my view it's not enough just to insist on high safety standards — and I don't believe even these are consistently applied. If we increasingly want to use buses as a policy tool to help fight congestion and pollution, then we should insist on high service and presentation standards across the board, even if this affects the ease of market entry. This would probably require a different attitude from the Office of Fair Trading, to whose scrutiny the 1985 Act opened up the bus industry for the first time. I won't labour the point, as I've made it often enough before, but I believe the OFT's involvement in the bus industry over these past 20 years has been wholly negative.

As everyone knows, there was a lot of shaking out in those early years. Operators came and went, National Bus Company (and later SBG) companies were split up and privatised, timetables and routes sometimes changed with alarming frequency, and shed

loads of costs were stripped out. Stagecoach used to claim its operating costs were 20% lower than the industry norm: in one Stagecoach acquisition I was involved with, unit costs were brought down by 40%. It still makes me angry to be told that 'all

deregulation achieved was to knock costs out'. Where would we be now if the renewed pressure on costs that began, not entirely coincidentally, with Labour's return to power in 1997, had been on top of costs that were 20% or more higher than they actually were? We wouldn't have all these cheap flights from easyJet and Ryanair either, if they hadn't gone through a similar process.

Certainly, instability cost the industry dear, although like the extent of service reductions it was often over-stated. The 1985 Act did not seem to anticipate that there would be problems — still in existence — at the interface between commercial and tendered services, although these could often have been eased with greater goodwill and common sense from those involved. PTEs and local authorities never seemed to like being faced with the true cost of poorly used services, preferring the old system of cross-subsidy from strong services. Along with a dislike of profits going in the form of dividends to private shareholders, this is of course at the heart of current calls for re-regulation in some form or other. *Buses* readers will already know I think this is a fundamentally flawed approach, so I won't labour this any farther either.

The slow boiling pressure for change

Once the industry's ownership structure had been sorted out in the early 1990s, things began to settle down, as Stephen Morris observed. Railways came along to divert people's attention, things didn't seem quite so bad, and most people had had enough for the time being or were waiting for a change of government.

Then from the late 1990s cost pressures again began to hit the industry hard — many of

them due directly or indirectly to the new government's policies — and local government was (and still is) faced with either losing services or shelling out to keep them going. All this coincided with growing congestion and a desire by all parties — especially as the spiralling cost of tram schemes saw them lose favour — to see buses play a bigger role in helping to tackle it. Now was the time for the PTEs in particular to start lobbying for change with a government they expected to be sympathetic.

Yet the fundamental conflicts reaching back to 1985 have still not been sufficiently addressed to enable buses to play an increased role as effectively as they could do. In my view there are three main issues, the most important of which, just as in the railways, is between track and operations — in this case between local government as highway controller, and bus operators. The second is quality standards, covering everything from fleet age and presentation to service reliability, fares, network coverage and marketing. The third is the interface between commercial and tendered services I mentioned earlier — not just timetable and fares co-ordination but also the wider financial implications.

Neither main party seems willing fully to acknowledge the achievements or interests of the other: it doesn't suit the PTEs in particular to recognise the patronage growth achievements of the best operators given the right conditions, and operators are generally reluctant — probably because they fear ending up on a slippery slope — to move far to meet local government concerns.

With the strains of 20 years, and the 20-year effect itself, something seems likely to give. Central government holds the key: will it find the right door to unlock? Clue: it's probably labelled 'National Congestion Charging'.

Brian Cox retired from Stagecoach in 2002, after 15 years with the group, 10 as a main board director. He spent the previous 19 years with British Rail, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire County Councils and the Scottish Bus Group. Now a consultant, he also is a non-executive director with Lothian Buses and the TAS Partnership and contributes a quarterly Inside Track column to Buses.

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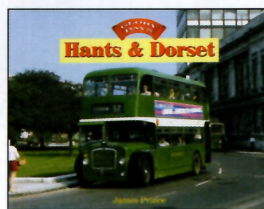
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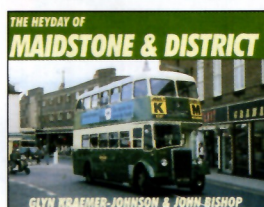


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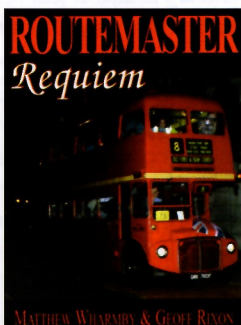


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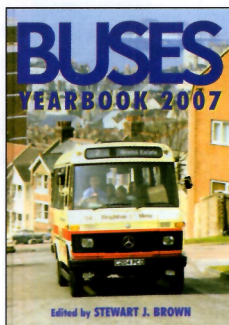


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Time to rectify a failed system

GRAHAM STRINGER MP argues that bus deregulation was one of Britain's biggest public policy mistakes and puts the case for big cities being able to control their networks again

In my view bus deregulation is one of Britain's biggest postwar public policy failures. Putting this mistake right would be one the best things the government could do to accelerate the sustainable and equitable regeneration of the city regions.

When deregulation was brought in, we were promised a competitive market that would attract new passengers. In reality, we have had 20 years of decline. In the city regions, ridership has fallen by half, fares are up 86% in real terms and service quality is patchy. Behind the statistics, MPs know about the real problems that some of the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society face from wave after wave of service cuts and fares increases. We know this because the hardship this causes is a growing feature of our surgeries and mailbags.

These issues are rarely touched upon in the industry's trade press, but the effects they can have on people's lives are severe — jobs are lost because people can't get to work, hospital appointments are missed, educational opportunities are forgone. MPs' direct experience tells them that it is difficult to see how the government's wider social inclusion objectives can be met without ensuring a properly planned bus network that provides the access to opportunity that these communities need.

Bus networks for city regions

Our city regions also need bus networks that can keep pace with their changing economies. We need to ensure that buses play the same role in Britain's city regions as they do in just about every other major modern conurbation around the world. To be part of wider integrated public transport networks — where buses connect with, rather than compete with, trains and trams. We need networks that serve not only the booming city centres but also help open up new development sites and business parks on the urban fringe. All of this requires long-term planning — impossible when bus routes are constantly chopping and changing to meet the operators' short-term financial interests.

Advocates of deregulation (not surprisingly) tend to ignore the avalanche of damning statistics about the comprehensive failure of the policy in favour of pointing to a rather short list of examples of where deregulation has 'worked'. They then suggest that it is the fault of the public sector that these examples are not replicated more widely. The few examples quoted as deregulation success stories are mostly (but not exclusively) prosperous, historic cities where access to the city centre is constrained by the street pattern — perfect conditions for bus-based park-&-ride and hence a fairly foolproof recipe for growing bus use.

However, to argue that after 20 years a few isolated success stories and special cases make up for the general failure of a policy would never be acceptable for other key public services like health and education. It shouldn't be acceptable for public transport either. The idea, too, that the failure of bus deregulation is down to the failure of the public sector to promote a partnership approach is equally unconvincing.

In the metropolitan areas, the public sector in the form of the PTEs pumps in around £500million a year into the bus industry. This translates

Left: Bus regulation has become a political issue in Sheffield, with dominant operator First the target of the fly posters.

DANIEL STAZICKER



Right: Competition in Union Street, Glasgow this year, with a First Glasgow Volvo Olympian overtaking a City Sprinter Dennis Dart, whose passengers appear to have hemmed in an Arriva Scotland West Dart. **PHIL HALEWOOD**



into new interchanges (75% now new or comprehensively modernised), innovations (like yellow schoolbuses and guided bus schemes), major bus

priority programmes (like the quality bus corridor programme in Greater Manchester), information provision (from travel centres to real-time information by text), improved security (everything from closed circuit television systems to employing community support officers).

PTEs aren't perfect and there's always more that can be done, but it's clear to me that the public sector has done its best to make deregulation work by fulfilling its side of the bargain. MPs are questioning to what extent the deregulated bus industry is willing or able to fulfill its side of the equation. If the operators are committed to a voluntary partnership approach, then why the poor standards of maintenance (15% of buses spot checked issued with prohibition notices)? Why the continuing fares increases? Why the progressive reduction in service levels? Why the appeals against concessionary fares schemes to try and ratchet more money out of finite local authority budgets? Why the rocketing costs of tendered services? Why the poor reliability (including in the off-peak when lack of bus priority measures cannot be an excuse)?

Patience is not just running out among MPs. It's also beginning to wear thin in Whitehall. As subsidy levels soar, Whitehall is beginning to ask why it is putting more and more money into an unregulated industry that is making healthy returns while delivering less and less. Especially when the failure of bus policy impinges on wider government goals for regeneration, sustainability and social inclusion.

Franchising is the answer

The answer, I believe, is for the government to ease the way towards the franchising of bus networks where local authorities and PTEs determine that this is the best way forward. Franchise is not an alternative to partnership. Franchising is a true public/private partnership. The public sector specifies the service and the private sector competes on merit to provide it.

Right: The future? An Optare Solo of Dunn-Line — owned by French group Veolia Transport — operating a South Yorkshire PTE contract held previously by First. **LEE WHITEHEAD**



Franchising is the norm now for public transport provision across Europe, for rail services in Britain and for bus services in London. Franchising should also result in better value-for-money for the taxpayer because excess profit can be used to cross-subsidise the social network. And, contrary to the Confederation of Passenger Transport's suggestion, there's no reason why franchising of bus services in the city regions would require the scale of London's current bus franchising budget either. In 1997/98, London had a far better bus network than the city regions have now, with ridership increasing as a result. The cost? £1million a year in subsidy. With franchising you get what you pay for. The taxpayer is already putting in more than £1.8billion a year into the bus industry. Franchising is about ensuring that the taxpayer gets the best bang for that buck. And for the public it's about giving them the kind of network they want:

- Better reliability because services would be monitored and poor performance would be penalised
- Better integration — one brand, one network, one set of tickets, simpler fares and buses connecting rather than competing.
- Dirty old buses sent to the scrapyard because contracts would require bus operators to provide newer, cleaner buses and to maintain them properly.
- More stability — with less frequent changes to fares, times and frequencies.

If more resources become available for public transport, then franchise standards can be ratcheted up to make sure any extra resource is turned quickly into better services. Finally, franchising does not mean that small operators need go to the wall as contracts can be written to ensure that good quality smaller operators get a proportion of the network.

The trade press faithfully reports that 'the industry' is opposed to franchising. Strange when everyone knows that a growing number of high quality overseas and domestic public transport providers would welcome the chance to compete on merit to operate services in areas currently locked up by local monopolies.

Earlier in the year, CPT lobbyist Stephen Heard derided MPs' concerns about deregulation boasting that the CPT's close working relationship with the Department for Transport meant that the policy was safe. Well, I wouldn't be so sure. There's a sense of change in the air and that after 20 years this failed policy could be on its way out. Rest assured that I, and many of my colleagues, will be working hard on behalf of our constituents to make sure that this is the case.

Graham Stringer has been Labour MP for Manchester Blackley since May 1997 and a member of the Commons backbench transport committee since July 2005. He was leader of Manchester City Council from 1984 to 1996.

Valhalla goes on hold in Hull



Above: Fleet renewal will remove the last pre-deregulation era buses from the East Yorkshire fleet, including open-top Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R 890 (AVK 177V) operated on Scarborough seafront. It was new to Tyne & Wear PTE in 1980. **TONY WILSON**

As its core company marks its 80th anniversary, EYMS Group chairman Peter Shipp remains determined to keep his business in independent control, despite some sharp rises in overhead costs.

ALAN MILLAR reports

As it celebrates its 80th anniversary in October, East Yorkshire Motor Services has become a decidedly rare — rather than necessarily endangered — species. It's one of only three former National Bus Company subsidiaries still owned by its management as an independent business, 20 years after privatisation began.

The others are Ambassador Travel, the small Great Yarmouth-based coach company spun out of the 1984 break-up of Eastern Counties and sold in November 1987, and Trent Barton, which has enjoyed celebrity status as the industry's clever ideas laboratory since Trent was privatised in December 1986.

Like his former colleagues at Trent Barton, EYMS Group chairman and chief executive Peter Shipp is approaching conventional retirement age. He turns 63 the same month that the company clocks up its eighth decade. But as a lifelong enthusiast and professional busman, he still relishes running buses and has no plans for a life of unbroken leisure, perhaps just to take all his holiday entitlement.



Above: One of the potentially fuel saving Alexander Dennis Enviro300s for Finlands awaiting delivery from Hull in September.

'I do not want to sell the company,' he says. A company of which he is sole owner, save for a shareholding held by a family trust in favour of his two sons and one daughter, all three of whom — strictly on their own merits, he insists — are East Yorkshire company employees.

'I still enjoy what I'm doing. My wife doesn't want me at home getting under her feet. Nor does she want to give up her job,' he says, adding that he feels by no means over the hill. 'I've got to be aware, though, that it would be silly to carry on regardless of circumstances. I've got to do what's right for the company.' While there are 'no plans for a sale in the near future' and he is wisely circumspect about the

longer-term prospects, it is hard not to sense that that inevitably one day EYMS will become part of something much bigger.

Stagecoach chief executive Brian Souter — who might fancy his chances of adding East Yorkshire to his former municipal operations in Hull — joked at an industry conference earlier this year that some of the last big independent bus owners might die in their buses rather than sell them. 'It will be like Valhalla. I think we may have to push Peter Shipp out into the Humber in a blazing VR.' While he enjoys the joke, the EYMS chairman can think of many better buses than a Bristol VR in which to be sent off like a Viking warrior.



Above: East Yorkshire retains a coach fleet, which includes Berkhof Axial-bodied Volvo B12M 54 (DC54 EYC), seen in Bridgend in an updated version of the traditional pre-NBC blue and cream coach livery. **MIKE HADDON**

It's a moot point whether the competition authorities would sanction such a deal anyway, although competition in Hull between Stagecoach and East Yorkshire is limited. Both serve the three main arterial corridors to the west (Hessle/Anlaby Roads), north (Beverley Road) and east (Holderness Road) — long roads with plenty of local shopping to generate healthy short distance traffic. But they keep themselves largely to their 'own' housing estates, with Stagecoach more dominant in east Hull, East Yorkshire in the west.

Pensions and diesel pile on the costs

If anything accelerates a sale of the business, it will be a sharp and unexpected rise in costs like pensions and fuel. The pension funds set up for white collar and operational staff when the company was privatised in February 1987 have developed a £10million black hole that has been costing £1million a year to service and were closed to new entrants all of five years ago.

The story is familiar to anyone clued up in such matters. More people are drawing or plan to draw a pension than are contributing to the funds. Medical advances are raising life expectancy every year — even bus drivers whose sedentary lifestyle doesn't give them the best health record — and stock market collapses of the early-1990s and again after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in America have depleted funds everywhere. Peter Shipp says he is more confident now

than even a few months ago about the prospects of the pension situation easing.

Fuel is costing the EYMS Group — of which East Yorkshire Motor Services is by far the biggest part — an extra £1million a year than it did 18 months ago. It may not get any worse in the foreseeable future, but equally he sees no reason for diesel prices to fall — not least when the government and oil companies benefit from the revenue windfall of such high prices. He just wishes the government would use some of the extra VAT revenue to plough additional Bus Service Operators' Grant (BSOG — the old fuel duty rebate) back into buses. No wonder the group has also become increasingly aware of the relative weights of new buses and the potential for more economical lightweight vehicles to cut its fuel bill.

The latest Alexander Dennis Enviro300 single-deckers for the Finglands subsidiary in Manchester weigh 8,300kg, a shade over three quarters of the 10,880kg of East Yorkshire's Wright-bodied Volvo B7RLEs; they are still more than a tonne lighter than its Alexander-bodied MAN 18.220s and nearly 700kg lighter than its re-engined Optare Excels. The Enviro300s and Volvos are both 12m 44-seaters, the Volvos nominally having capacity for four extra standing passengers, though in real life standing capacity is determined more by the space fare-paying riders are prepared to occupy. If low weight translates into lower fuel consumption, and reliability is comparable, these won't be EYMS's last Enviro300s.

Below: A reminder of the 1993 Hull bus wars, with 915 (JGG 14P), an ECW-bodied Leyland Atlantean new to East Kent, and a Leyland National operating in the livery introduced following privatisation.



One man and his bus company

Peter Shipp has worked full-time in the bus industry for 45 years and has been with East Yorkshire Motor Services since February 1980, when he joined as traffic manager.

Brought up in Torquay in a typical no-car family, he developed a lifelong interest in buses and spent his later school holidays working in BET-owned Grey Cars' coach tour booking offices in Torquay and Babbacombe. His future father-in-law made him aware that BET provided management training and, although too young at the time, his enthusiasm persuaded Devon General Omnibus & Touring Company general manager Tom Strange to offer him, aged 18, a junior traffic apprenticeship.

Four years later and one of few non-graduates enrolled on to the BET programme, he was dispatched to Stockport to learn the rudiments of bus company management with North Western Road Car. By 1969, with the National Bus Company in control, he was offered a choice of posting to Yorkshire Traction or Southdown. He chose the latter, starting in June 1969 as traffic superintendent at Brighton and ending up as a divisional manager. In 1976, he became assistant traffic manager at Northern General, earning the then princely salary of £1,000 a year.

NBC had used East Yorkshire as a training ground for young managers and he recalls being introduced soon after joining as 'the current traffic manager'. As deregulation loomed, his job was redesignated commercial manager, then commercial director.

He is the last of the seven management owners who bought the business in February 1987. The chairman/managing director, Alan Stephenson, formed his own AJS Group to buy West Yorkshire Road Car and London Country North East from NBC in August 1987 and March 1988, and subsequently sold his stake in EYMS.

Product manager Ian Conyers and Scarborough manager Gordon England retired, engineer Derek Bradley left for Road Car (he remains engineering director under Stagecoach ownership) and accountant Stuart Wilde left to join AJS, became joint owner of Blazefield and remains under Transdev ownership. Finance director Godfrey Burley remained as joint MD. When he left in September 1997, he took National Holidays (the bulk of the EYMS coach business) with him.

Peter Shipp is in day-to-day charge at East Yorkshire and also represents the company in a wide range of community and business partnerships and on national committees.



East Yorkshire is also about to change over to bio diesel, a largely renewable fuel, from a local supplier called Rix, partly on the grounds that Rix offers better credit terms than its previous source of conventional diesel.

Overall, these costs — and problems at Finglands — have depressed EYMS Group profits. From a best-ever profit after tax of £1.774million in 2001, it fell to £789,000 last year, which Peter Shipp regards as little better than break-even. Over that same period, turnover rose from £27million to £35million, taking the all-important profit margin from 6.57% to 2.25%. The big groups still generate margins into double figure percentages.

These financial pressures will also constrain EYMS's ability to expand by acquisition, as does French giant Veolia's apparent willingness to pay top dollar for companies like Bebb's and Dunn-Line, which operate in markets for contracted services. There are precious few opportunities around for businesses like EYMS to buy good operators running profitable commercial bus routes.

Takeover opportunities taken and lost

Today's EYMS Group has 19 subsidiaries registered at its Anlaby Road, Hull head office — a former vicarage that's been the company's nerve centre since the garage next door opened in 1929. Peter Shipp's office — decorated liberally with an impressive display of diecast model buses — used to be the vicar's bedroom, and generous cornice work and stained glass windows hint at past prosperity in this part of inner east Hull.

Only three subsidiaries — East Yorkshire Motor Services, Finglands and Whittle Bus & Coach — are active. The others are a combination of acquired limited companies like Connor & Graham, Primrose Valley Coaches, Kingstonian Travel Services and Frodingham Coaches. Others — such as Hull & District Motor Services — protect it against the possibility of new competitors using names that imply more longevity.

Below: Whittle Y214 HWJ, a Plaxton Pointer 2-bodied Dennis Dart SLF new to Connex Bus. IAN DENT



Above: What might have been. Grimsby-Cleethorpes Transport 28 (E328 PBE), a Gardner-engined Leyland Tiger with Alexander P-type body, in the summer of 1993 when EYMS was bidding to add this council-owned company to its portfolio.



Above: Finglands 1425 (M425 RRN), one of the Alexander PS-bodied Volvo B10M-55s acquired with Stagecoach's original Manchester business, in May 1996. Stagecoach's red, orange and blue stripes have been repainted in Finglands' colours.

Expansion from local bus company to a geographically diverse group fits with the view that businesses cannot survive by standing still. They either grow or slide backwards. It also spread the overheads across a wider income base. In National Bus Company ownership, East Yorkshire was deemed too small to stand on its own, and for a time it shared management resources with Lincolnshire Road Car, a similarly heavily rural operation with urban hot spots across the Humber Estuary. However, the Thatcher government's enforced break-up of United Auto transferred the Scarborough and Pickering depots to East Yorkshire in October 1986, adding 70 buses to a fleet that had shrunk to around 150 in Hull and the East Riding.

The seven-strong management team got the company for £1million — just over a third of the value of its assets — in February 1987, beating off an 11th hour rival bid from Appleby's of Conisholme, which for a time operated coaches and buses in Hull in competition with the two incumbent operators, before collapsing in 2001. Four other parties had expressed interest in East Yorkshire.

Ever alert to acquisition opportunities, it also spent some of its money on an ironically aggressive defence strategy in 1992/93, when Hull Council offered Kingston upon Hull City Transport — its near bankrupt, over-expanded arms' length bus company — for sale. EYMS wanted to buy it, but perhaps fearful of job losses, the council instead sold it to employee-owned Cleveland Transit in December 1993, 11 months before Cleveland sold out to Stagecoach.

Fearing that KHCT's disintegration would attract someone with Stagecoach's reputation for seizing such an opportunity, East Yorkshire launched services in competition with the collapsing municipal, and took over its 24-vehicle Metro Citybus competitor in September 1992. This strategy, along with the acquisition of several other East and North Yorkshire independents, provided long-term strength, but the short-term cost was to curb its ambitions to expand elsewhere. One opportunity considered would have taken EYMS into Peter Shipp's native Devon. 'We looked at Dartline in Exeter,' he says. 'We decided not to buy it. We took the view that if

an acquisition was distant, it had got to be big enough to sustain its management.'

He is more sorry that the group's bid to buy Grimsby-Cleethorpes Transport in November 1993 was unsuccessful. This 111-vehicle undertaking was one of the first municipal companies to be sold on the open market and he says the EYMS bid not only was firm, but offered the council marginally more money than the winning one from Stagecoach. The snag was that Stagecoach — newly floated on the stock market — had immediate access to funds. EYMS needed to arrange back loans, which Peter Shipp is confident it would have got. 'It would have fitted very neatly with East Yorkshire,' he says still with some regret, 13 years after this greatest 'what might have been' of the group's near 20-year history.

Expansion farther afield

The opportunity to buy Finglands in May 1992 arose from an agent seeking a new owner for this long-established and then highly profitable business serving the student communities of south Manchester with 41 vehicles. 'We saw it as a useful add-on and thought we could expand it,' says Peter Shipp.

Part of the growth came in October 1995, when Stagecoach sold EYMS its original Manchester operation, a Ribble offshoot competing against GM Buses South (GMS) on the 192 corridor to Stockport. The sale allowed Stagecoach to acquire GMS and gave EYMS 13 nearly new Alexander-bodied Volvo B10M-55s that continue to be among its most durable single-deckers.

Finglands later came off the 192, returned and then withdrew recently in the face of unequal competition from UK North. The group's action plan to restore Finglands to past profitability sees it concentrating on the Wilmslow Road corridor and replacing its nine oldest buses — Volvo Citybuses too old for Greater Manchester PTE contracts — with the five Enviro300s and four 10-year-old Volvo Olympians cascaded from Yorkshire and fitted with eight extra seats.

By contrast with urban Manchester and its huge student movements, the most recent acquisition — of Kidderminster-based Whittle Coach & Bus in early 2004 — took EYMS into deeply rural Shropshire and Worcestershire. The purchase followed an approach from Ron Whittle, who wanted to retire and whose family had pursued their own careers outside the coach and bus industry. 'It fell into the right category for us,' says Peter Shipp. 'A quality operation big enough to have management in place.' Today, its managing director, David Shurden, also runs Finglands.

Rural operation, however, is no picnic. If you didn't know otherwise, you might imagine that urban buses are far more likely to be damaged running on congested roads, but Shropshire

The East Yorkshire story so far

BET's British Automobile Traction formed East Yorkshire Motor Services on 5 October 1926 to take over Hull & District Motor Services and Lee & Beulah. The London & North Eastern Railway acquired a shareholding in 1929 and EYMS was part of the Tilling & BAT group from 1928 to 1942, after which it reverted to BET until it sold its British bus operations in March 1968. It became a founder part of the National Bus Company in January 1969.

Following sale to its management in February 1987, EYMS made the following acquisitions. 1987: Cherry Coaches, Beverley; Wallace Arnold Scarborough operations including Hardwick's Services. 1988: Phillips Coaches, Shiptonthorpe. 1989: Cottingham Mini Coaches. 1992: Finglands, Manchester; Thornton Dale Coaches, Pickering; Rhodes Coaches, Wawne (buses); Metro Citybus, Hull; 1993/94: Connor & Graham, Easington. 1995: Hart Coaches, Stockton-on-Tees; 1996: Charterplan (from Stagecoach Manchester); Hollings Coaches, North Shields. 1997: Armstrong Galley (from Stagecoach Busways), Kingstonian Travel Services (from Stagecoach Hull). 2004: Whittle Coach & Bus.

In 1994, its owners joined those of Blazefield, Lynton Travel and Q Drive to form Prism Rail, which won three rail franchises and sold out later to National Express.

East Yorkshire livery was indigo (very dark blue) and primrose until NBC corporate livery was introduced in 1972. A few buses were indigo and white, but poppy red and white became standard until after privatisation. A new red and more white livery lasted until the present crimson (similar to Devon General maroon) and cream replaced it from 1996. Indigo and primrose returned from 1988 for Routemasters and, later, Volvo Olympians on Hull city route 56 until crimson low-floor double-deckers arrived in 2002.

Right: Ready for service in the main East Yorkshire fleet in September was 542 (F242 MBA), an Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus new to Finglands in 1989.



Above: A prewar scene with Brush-bodied Leyland Tiger TS7 280 (AKH 768) and older 258 (RH 8927). **J. F. HIGHAM**



Above and inset: One of the most distinctive features of East Yorkshire double-deckers was the tapered roof designed to negotiate the arch in the North Bar at Beverley. Two Roe-bodied examples show this, preserved AEC Regent V 652 (WAT 652) of 1958 and the interior of a 1952 Leyland Titan PD2/12.



Above: East Yorkshire continued to specify some of the Beverley Bar shape on lowheight double-deckers. In this 1984 scene, poppy red Park Royal-bodied Daimler Fleetline 866 (RAT 866G) is in Hull.





Left: Finglands 1761 (X761 ABU), a Plaxton President-bodied Volvo B7TL, in the new Finglands livery, with orange rather than brown skirt. EAMONN KENTELL

lanes bring their own hazards. Buses are covered perpetually in mud and dust and the narrowness of the roads causes almost daily body damage by objects stationary, dislodged or moving. At Whittle's Ludlow depot, this is made more difficult by a perpetual shortage of skilled engineering staff in this sparsely populated agricultural area.

The fleet is being modernised and rationalised by a mix of new coaches and by cascading buses like Mini Pointer Darts, B10M-55s and Mercedes-Benz Varios from Yorkshire.

Fleet size and purchasing policy

By coincidence, Finglands and Whittle each have 57 vehicles. By another, the 336-strong East Yorkshire fleet (which still uses the Scarborough & District name for the former United services) falls equally into single and double-deck populations of 168 vehicles. The double-deck content is dropping slowly — eight years ago there were 182 to 146 single-deck — but peak loadings (mainly school journeys and some Hull city routes) demand their retention. So does a desire to provide passengers on longer coastal and inland routes with a good view of the scenery.

As master of his own destiny, Peter Shipp shops around for the best vehicles. Early comparative trials at East Yorkshire and Finglands favoured the Volvo B7TL over the Dennis Trident and all Tridents are now at Finglands. However, the fuel economy claims being made for the new Enviro400 double-decker could change that allegiance. Preference for Northern Counties over Alexander bodies led to a change of coachbuilder when Alexander Dennis closed the old Northern Counties plant at Wigan and stopped building the President double-decker. Having already bought Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied single-deckers, it bought its first Eclipse Geminis last year and came back for more this year, even though they command a premium price.

the ex-Stagecoach Volvos and seem destined to lead second lives with Whittle's. There also are two low-floor O405Ns new to Finglands in 1999 and now in Yorkshire; they are only half a tonne lighter than the Eclipse Urbans.

Second lives are definitely not planned for 25 Cummins-engined Optare Excels new in 1996-98, the group's first low-floor buses. Unreliability prompted the early sale of 10 of them in part-exchange for the MAN 18.220s and two others departed more recently. Most of the others have been repowered with Euro3 ISBe units in place of their original B-series; they have cream rather than crimson windscreen pillars.

Latest midibuses are six Plaxton Primos to replace Varios in Bridlington and Hull. They can negotiate narrow estate roads that wouldn't accommodate MPDs and despite some technical teething troubles are proving popular with drivers and passengers. 'I believe they have the potential to be good buses,' says Peter Shipp.

Steady investment in new and later secondhand buses means East Yorkshire will reach another milestone this year — withdrawal of its last buses from the pre-privatisation era. Of the nine Citybuses transferred from Finglands, five will be converted to open-top to replace the last VRs and Leyland Atlanteans on Scarborough seafront. The others — and the recent loss of some East Riding school

contracts — should see off the last ex-NBC Leyland Olympians. Other than heritage vehicles that include an AEC Regent V, an open-top Leyland Titan PD2 and a Routemaster, the oldest double-deckers will be ex-Eastbourne Olympians new in 1988.

The city reinvents itself

Operationally, one of the biggest opportunities ahead of East Yorkshire is the massive redevelopment of Hull city centre in a drive to create a shopping destination for new residents as well as people living farther afield. The area around Paragon railway station is being rebuilt with shopping malls and apartments for city centre living.

The new buildings are fast taking shape on the site of the old — and distinctly unappealing — Ferensway bus station, which closed in September 2004. Temporary kerbside and parking facilities have been provided around a former car park in nearby Albion Street — the city's last World War 2 bombsite. While the passenger waiting areas are no better (or worse) than at Ferensway, this site is closer to the shops most passengers currently want to reach, and buses are able to get in and out more speedily. The loss of direct interchange with trains has barely been an issue.

However, a new interchange with saw-tooth bays and a 21st century glass-fronted terminal building is being erected alongside the railway station. While it is farther away from today's shops, it is in the heart of the new retailing centre.

Proof positive that — whoever ultimately owns today's EYMS companies — its crimson buses will benefit from investment in modern infrastructure and from the current owner's commitment to working in the community to ensure that they go on playing an integral role in a city that is reinventing itself for a more prosperous future. No wonder that, as far as he is concerned, Valhalla can wait.



Right: The new bus interchange building taking shape alongside Hull Paragon railway station.

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Collectors continue to benefit from an ever growing choice of new castings from the major manufacturers of diecast model buses and coaches — primarily in OO gauge 1:76 scale, but also in larger scales up to 1:24 serviced by SunStar and Original Classics.

EFE is broadening its choice of 1:76-scale Routemaster castings, by adding the rare forward entrance variant based on both the 27ft 6in and 30ft originals, as well as complementing the RCL Green Line coach with the 27ft 6in RMC. The first of these, due for release by Christmas, will depict solitary London Transport RMF1254, LT RMA9 during the type's brief period in public service on Romford-Dagenham route 175 and RMC1506 operating the 719 to Victoria. It has also revised and improved the tooling for its existing Routemaster models, with two RMLs, RCL2252, RM837 and prototype RM1 all due out over the same period.

In time for EFE Showbus International on 24 September, it will release two versions of its Leyland Titan TN15 in Stagecoach East London liveries, T465 operating night bus N15 and (the Showbus special) preserved T1, as well as its Willowbrook BET single-decker masquerading as Leyland Olympian 11 (523 CTF) in Fishwick's livery.

Corgi celebrates its 50th anniversary and is adding another modern single-deck bus to its 1:76-scale Original Omnibus Company range this autumn with the 12m Wright 'Millennium' body, which can be depicted as an Eclipse Urban on Volvo B7RLE, Eclipse Metro on B7L and Solar on Scania L94UB. The forthcoming

Below: The OOC Lothian Eclipse Urban from Corgi and its limited edition Mettoy 1:36-scale clockwork RM5.



Above and below: EFE's new forward-entrance Routemaster and the pretend Fishwick's Olympian for Showbus.



MAN-based Meridian adds further potential variety. This complements Corgi's earlier castings of the articulated version of this body and of Wright's Gemini double-decker. The first releases are limited editions of the Eclipse Urban in the liveries of two Scottish operators, starting — surprisingly as it's hardly the most 'collectable' of fleets — with Whitelaw's of Stonehouse, followed in November by a Lothian bus.

For 1:50-scale collectors, Corgi is producing a specially boxed variant of its long established Routemaster as RM2217 for around £40, with the livery, advertisements and destinations it carried on 9 December last year when it made the last scheduled RM departure on route 159. Strictly speaking, it doesn't quite depict that historic last journey, as the destination shown is

Marble Arch rather than Streatham Hill.

Mettoy, which launched the Corgi brand in 1956, produced tinplate toys from 1934, many of them with a clockwork mechanism and, as part of the Corgi anniversary, it's producing a strictly limited edition of — appropriately — 2,006 1:36-scale clockwork tinplate Routemasters for £79.99 each. You'll pay for rarity, finish and features, rather than slavish accuracy. These European-made models depicting RM5 on route 8B will come in a period-style box and feature such detail as glazed windows, interior fittings, an operating

bell and front wheel steering. The key for the winding mechanism fits ahead of the nearside rear wheel.

Besides releasing three versions of its new Alexander Dennis Enviro400 casting (see pV), Creative Master Northcord has produced the Scania OmniCity in Metrobus Fastway guise and plans to sell it in First Hampshire & Dorset and Menzies Aviation liveries. Other releases in the pipeline from this modern bus specialist include the Alexander ALX400 as Dublin Bus Trident DT5, the Mercedes-Benz Citaro in Solent Blue Line, Wilts & Dorset and First Manchester liveries and the Alexander Royale depicted as the ex-Singapore Volvo Olympian in First Pennine red and yellow.

Another eagerly awaited newcomer, the SunStar 1:24-scale Duple Vista-bodied Bedford OB in Yellowway livery, arrived as we prepared to close for press. We intend to review it in more detail soon, but initial impressions are positive. Like the more expensive Original Classics model in this same scale, it has a sliding roof and passenger door, but instead of working lights the bonnet and driver's door (with first aid kit) open. A Southern Vectis version follows soon. Prices range about £5 either side of £80.

Below: The Yellowway-liveried 1:24 Bedford OB from SunStar.



Trux, the Australian specialist that sells on line (www.topgear.com.au) has added another version of its early postwar Sydney double-decker selection, this time an AEC Regent III with original canvas folding forward door as well as the open platform these buses retained to the end of their working lives. Trux also sells Australian variants of EFE castings, notably all-Leyland Titans in TD1 and TD5 guises.

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... the latest 1:76 models reviewed

JOHN G. LIDSTONE assesses the London RTW, newly released in Corgi's Original Omnibus Company range

The London RTW is a long-awaited and welcome new casting. The original vehicle was the least common of the main postwar RT types, an all-Leyland Titan PD2 of which 500 were built to the unusual combination of 8ft width (it was London's first wide motorbus) and 26ft length. Besides many London options — routes, liveries and overseas visits — other livery possibilities include Stevenson's of Uttoxeter, A1 Service, Barton and Osborne's of Tollesbury.

As my colleague Mark Lyons puts it, this casting is something of a curate's egg — good in parts. Corgi has got the overall look and proportions quite well and it has more detail than previous 1:76 RT-class castings. It's good, for example, to see London Transport's trafficator indicator 'ears' on it, but they are too small and are edged in red rather than black — although Mark reckons it's still worth buying just for the trafficators.

The first release is of preserved RTW467 (LLU 957), the last to run in normal London service (from Brixton Garage on 14 May 1966).

Picture: JOHN G. LIDSTONE



Presumably this bus is readily available to make accurate measurements, yet I was disappointed by many small inaccuracies in the casting, which retails at around £24. As with OOC's recent East Lincs halfcab, a major tooling error is that the cab is too narrow. A moment's study shows you that the RTW radiator has straight sides, but it tapers inward on the model toward the base. The front dash ventilator is too deep.

Half-drop windows are printed on glazing. The top corners curve gently, which looks wrong (they should be squared off). Side half-drops are roughly where they should be, but they are printed far too high at the front, making the window halves unequal, especially on the lower saloon. The platform rear window extends too far to the offside; the platform rail that diagonally crosses it is applied in the wrong place (it should go upward to the offside top corner). The platform rear rail is not separated from the rear wall, so the rail and the gap are both painted white, producing a chunky bar. On the offside, the panel joint beneath the offside route number plate holder is missing.

The fuel filler is silver, but so is the whole aperture area around it, which looks daft. The offside rear corner has the famous 'Watch your Step' advert, but this is small and applied too low. Route numbers are not in correct font, but the adverts — including LT-inspired displays either side of the front destination — are delightful.



Picture: MARK LYONS

Strangely, the nearside upper saloon panelling features a BESI bus location system panel — surely a detail better printed rather than cast, as not all RTWs had these. Bonnet handles would have been better cast or plugged in, but are printed and don't look well, nor is there any edging to the bonnet fleetnumber. Both rearview mirrors are also too small, the nearside one being misplaced too far under the canopy. Nor is there a route number in the canopy route number box.

This casting features new wheels, and the rears look especially good. Inside, there are construction poles in both decks, the seats are all over reddish brown, while the ceilings (which should be cream) and window pillars (should be green) are also red. Detail errors like these are just plain sloppy. When, for about £1 more, you can buy Northcord's nigh-on perfect Enviro400 casting without construction poles, with lens lamps instead of silvered blobs and 'behind glass' destination displays that look right, Corgi perhaps needs to match those standards.

Had it done so, this casting would have been an absolute corker. But it's still worth buying as a reminder of a much-loved class of classic London bus — a good average.

ALAN MILLAR sizes up Creative Master Northcord's Alexander Dennis Enviro400

We have been waiting even longer for Northcord's Enviro400 double-decker, the first time this model manufacturer has developed a casting in parallel with the manufacturer of the original vehicle. Five *Buses* readers have been waiting patiently since February while a quest for detailed accuracy delayed its release, the prizes — and a review copy — finally reaching us during August.

Most collectors should be delighted by the finished result, which retails for around £25. It is bang on scale for the 10.6m Enviro400 that is becoming the standard with most London operators and appears to represent the higher version built for the capital. Appropriately, the first release shows Stagecoach East London 18500, the prototype bus named *Spirit of London* as a symbolic replacement for the

Trident destroyed by the Tavistock Square suicide bomber on 7 July last year.

The detail is exquisite. The bonnet lifts to reveal a half-black, half-green engine, inside not only are there all the proper blue seats (including the 'spotter' seats behind the driver), handrails and no construction poles, but there even is a representation of the climate control system at the head of the stairs, while the staircase panel downstairs has a Stagecoach beach ball logo. Outside, optional features like back-end climate control grille and lower deck offside emergency door are printed on. Wing mirrors are yellow, wheels and tree deflectors silver, as they should be on this bus. About the only small blemish I could find is that the lower deck windscreen is single-piece, not divided as on the real bus. It carries fleetnumber SCG

18500 in large black type at the rear of its white roof. Further Enviro400 releases in the pipeline include Metroliner TE681 and London General E4.



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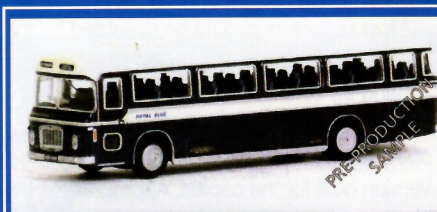
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Just for the fun of it all



The Japanese were quite good at doing traditional halfcab British (and Irish) double-decker friction toys. All of these were bought on eBay with two coming from sellers in America. The largest by Asakusa is 1ft long.

ANDREW GORDON recalls when he discovered that buses didn't have steering wheels on the roof and why, in later life, he once again gains much pleasure from toy and model buses

I have a confession to make. For many years I was in denial. Denial of the fact that I actually rather liked model buses. It was stupid really. I used to go to rallies and make a point of not visiting the trade stands. It was because, deep, deep down, I knew there was an avid little collector just waiting to break free.

In my more formative years, there were no such inhabitations. Toy buses — and they were toys in those days — played an important part in my

developing interest. My parents have tucked away some of those embarrassing pictures to show at family gatherings of the junior Gordon clad in bus conductor's uniform and sat astride a rather large plastic red double-decker — with steering wheel on the roof, of course — beaming from ear to ear.

I seem to remember an older equally large tin single-decker halfcab, which I think was my elder brother's. It had an

attached tin grille that, as is the way with these things, soon became detached. I also

remember an early garden path incident where, in full flight on top of one of these contraptions, a low brick wall suddenly leapt out in front of me to impede my progress — but there the memories start to go a bit dim.

I know it's a cliché, but at a slightly older age, I really was the small boy stood outside the toy shop each week to check that the target of my desires, a Dinky Bedford VAL on display, had not been sold until I had collected the small fortune of accumulated pocket money required to purchase it. I remember it was many weeks and it's difficult to imagine any toyshop these days — and let's face it, they are now as rare as real fish and chip emporiums — changing its display so irregularly.



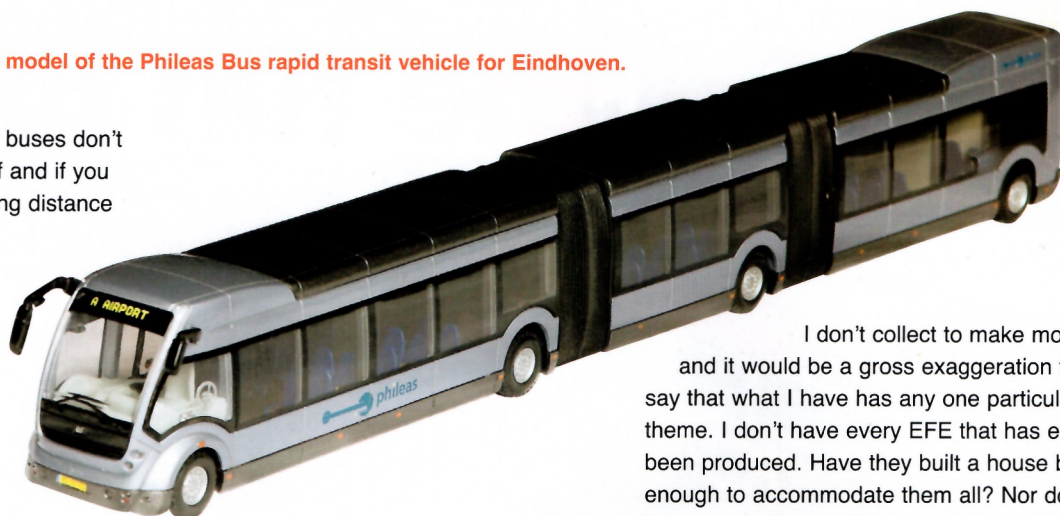
Above: I do collect some EFes like this wonderful AEC Renown in Burwell & District Motor Services colours.

Right: Personal favourites: The 1:43 scale Minichamps Büssing D2U Berlin double-decker and 1:87 scale BUB six-wheel Mercedes-Benz O10000.



Lion Toys makes this 1:50 scale model of the Phileas Bus rapid transit vehicle for Eindhoven.

By this stage, I had learnt that buses don't have steering wheels on the roof and if you were lucky and lived within striking distance of London, Ian Allan produced a spotters' book that let you underline the buses you had seen. Once an extensive range of books, by the mid-1970s it was just London. It was all very frustrating for the junior Gordon who happened to live on the Alder Valley side of Guildford, although one solution was to make up my own fleetlists thanks to my long suffering father who, as an electronics design engineer, was able to supply me with early computer printouts of numbers.



Opening the floodgates

Maybe it was just about being older and possibly a little wiser or just looking for something related that was still just fun, but one day a year or so ago I decided to finally give into that 'avid little collector urge', and it's fair to say, have not looked back since as my reeling bank balance lays testimony.

Then there is that terrible period that many of us go through where we think that we can do a better paint job on our prized buses than Matchbox, Corgi or Dinky. Sadly, I remember thinking at the time it was a bad idea, but it didn't stop me from doing it.

Then it all stopped. Toy buses were for children and now I was an adult — well almost — and life had other distractions. And so it seemed as if the stage had been set. I still have a deep interest in the bus and coach industry. After numerous attempts to do other things, I make my living reporting on it as a journalist, but that means it's a different type of interest. It's my job, it's not a hobby and in a sense, the nature of the beast is that you probably know more than is good for you and have access to too much information. There is little that genuinely surprises anymore, which in some ways is a real shame.

Suddenly, rallies took on a new fascination as I went scurrying to the stalls to see what I could burrow out. There was also a new phenomenon to explore called 'swap meets'. One of the great joys about knowing so little about a subject is that there is always the unexpected in store because you never quite know what you're going to unearth — and much more to the point, what it's going to cost. It's just like the good old days of going to a new town to do a bit of bus spotting. All in all, it's bad news for the dealers. Collectors learn quickly that there is enormous price elasticity when it comes to buying and it really does pay to shop around.

I don't collect to make money and it would be a gross exaggeration to say that what I have has any one particular theme. I don't have every EFE that has ever been produced. Have they built a house big enough to accommodate them all? Nor do I restrict myself to particular scales, model manufacturers, operators, vehicle types or operating areas. In fact, there are few EFEs in my collection, excellent though they are, and even fewer Corgis — at least UK Corgis that is.

So I buy what I like, not what I feel I must buy to keep my collection complete. That might seem a fairly obvious observation, but us collector types are a little bit vulnerable to this. In other areas, I confess to being less principled and I can think of at least one magazine I only continue to buy because I have every issue from No1. Now let's be honest. How many of you out there feel the same way?

If there are themes, it's different model and toy bus producers from around the world — especially if they're not from China. These days, there are precious few. Just to be contradictory though, I also like old tin toys, particularly those made in China and Japan in the 1960s and 1970s by the likes of KTS and Charmy for the US market. I'm also very fond of American Corgis. For me, these are about as good as it gets and I'm looking

forward to adding the latest release, a Greyhound Flexible Clipper to my collection — when I can find one at the right price.

The rich variety of models produced by various manufacturers for Hong Kong is another area of interest, as are those for the Australian market. I've been to the former territory, but not the latter country, so no logic there. Trux is doing a great job, in my view, with a growing range of models for Australia, some of which have been produced in conjunction with ABC and EFE.

www.topgear.com.au is recommended, as is

www.80mbusmodel.com for Hong Kong.



That famous Solido 1:50 scale RT with a Leyland radiator and Southdown livery.

Get the Pleasure!

The illustration shows the C.40.7 Display Cabinet etched London Transport with the matching London Transport door moulding. Inside Dimensions 20.6" High x 40" Wide x 2 ³/₄" Deep with 7 spaces @ 71mm (6 glass shelves 4mm thick) available with and without the etching, other etchings available, Greenline and the Roundal logo.



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Routemaster RM1, but not as we know it. A 1950s friction tin gem from Wells Brimtoy.

perfectly the essence of this all-time classic vehicle and it's no wonder that it has become a model maker's favourite and can be bought in a rich variety of liveries. I have several in my collection.

Think small, think big

I have a few plastic Wikings from Germany, but don't get too excited by these, perhaps because of the scale, which at 1:87 is about as small as I go. Brekina I like more because its models are better detailed, but prices reflect that. I have just purchased a metal BUB six-wheel Mercedes-Benz O10000 to the same scale, which I think is wonderful, but a pride and joy is a 1:43 scale Minichamps Bussing D2U Berlin double-decker.

A manufacturer that I feel is often overlooked is Lion Toys of the Netherlands, which has produced some excellent models of DAF buses. It has also created a stunning 1:50 model of Phileas, the advanced passenger transport vehicle that has been developed for Eindhoven. I have one, and I'm proud of it even though one of the seats has worked loose and there is no way of getting at it to stick it back into place.

Despite the fact that I no longer have anywhere to put them — all cupboards and shelves are full — I do like my model buses big. I bought the first SunStar Routemaster and thought it was great. I also bought the Green Line coach, which for some reason I felt was slightly less great. I'm still waiting (writing this in July) along with hordes of others for the Bedford OB. However the 1:24 scale OB produced by Original Classics will be a hard act to follow.

If I had to pick one favourite it would have to be Solido's 1:50 scale RT. Probably my favourite bus anyway. The French manufacturer, which also produced a delightful Renault TN6, captures

The bidding opportunity

The medium that has transformed my model buying has been eBay. Just saying the word arouses strong emotions in some people. They look askance at you as if to say, 'Don't you know better?' But the reality is that a growing number of buyers and sellers — millions globally — finds it an effective, organised, disciplined and well-policed marketplace. That's on the whole. Remember, nothing in life is perfect and always read sellers' feedback. It's there for a good reason.

Decriers of eBay argue that you're always faced with postage costs and there is no doubt that some sellers are more than just a bit fanciful when it comes to quoting reasonable prices for this. But if that's the case, don't bid on their products. Such is the price elasticity, particularly with toy and model buses, that postage rarely needs to be a critical issue. And if you're buying items that are not

readily available in the UK, there are always going to be postage costs.

The golden rule is that something is only worth what you are prepared to pay for it. Decide what you want to spend and stick to it. Don't get sucked into a bidding war because you can be reasonably sure that the target of your interest will come up again, and likely at a price you prefer.

I'll relate a story that encapsulates for me what it's all about. I had set my sights on what I feel is a rather attractive tin American yellow school bus that was produced in Japan some years ago by KTS. One came up on eBay and, amazingly, the seller was located in my home town. The postage quoted seemed a bit steep, but I thought I could always go and collect. The toy was missing one of its wheel hub covers, which also rather put me off, but I bid on it anyway. In the event, it was sold for far more than I was prepared to pay. A few weeks later the same toy came up for sale in much better condition from a seller in New York State, USA. I bid again and this time was successful. My total bill including postage was significantly less than what the first purchaser paid.

eBay is a great leveller. It gives you access to an unbeatable range of toys and models and there are some real bargains to be had if you're sensible. Think internationally as well, but remember that if you purchase outside the European Union, the chances are that the new addition to your collection will be subject to import duty if it is valued at more than £18. Sellers have to complete a customs' declaration and this will be attached to the outside of your package. It's just a suggestion, but also always use PayPal. It handles any currency conversions and is a very secure way of paying. Happy hunting.



I have a soft spot for Metsul Leyland Atlanteans from Portugal and have accumulated several, paying decidedly more than the 2 Pisos indicated on the packaging.

Little things that mean a lot

MICHAEL DRYHURST

acknowledges that he can buy models he only dreamed might be available when he made do with cardboard conversions and a multitude of scales. But he still has a wish list of models that have yet to appear

For as long as I have been interested in 1:1 buses, I've also collected their miniature equivalents. Postwar, my Pelham & District Traction Company purchased as many Dinky Toys 29C London Passenger Transport Board STL-based AECs and their Leyland equivalent as it could. But despite being a huge fan of London Transport, I was greatly frustrated that all available double-deck models, in all scales, were based on London prototypes. Later, I used Modelcraft's 4mm-scale plans of British buses, cut them out and glued them to postcard to rebody some 29Cs. Add a suitably sanded/shaped balsawood roof and P&D had provincial double-deckers, but its GM yearned for more diecast variety.

Mettoy launched its Corgi range in 1956 but took another eight years to release a double-decker. That was a Routemaster, one of a plethora of RMs in various scales, from Matchbox to Spot-on via Budgie, Corgi, Dinky, Zebra, to name but a few; Spot-on lived up to its



The model of Brighton Corporation AEC Regent 63 is valued on the collector market at almost three times the price paid back in 1965 for the 1:1 version when purchased for preservation. Windscreen is too big, front bulkhead window the wrong shape, front upper deck guttering wrong; and *Model Price Guide* quotes the wrong route number. This is Corgi No.40404, a very limited edition.

name. In 1962, Dinky redeemed itself with No.292, its first provincial double-decker, based on the Leyland Atlantean with MCCW body.

But then, Pelham & District was but a memory, but I was still collecting, a quest helped by my international travel to movie locations. French Dinky, Mercury, Saba, Solido, Tekno, Tootsietoy all provided worthwhile diecast bus models, and in plastic there was Anguplas, Wiking, etc. Back in the UK, Triang's Rovex subsidiary produced a coarse 4mm plastic RT (and an equally grotty Bedford/Duple Vega coach). Wilson Lorries offered a nice 7mm Foden double-decker, while in the same scale Mettoy provided something based seemingly on a BMMO D-type.

Anbrico saved the day from around 1969, opening up a new world with its excellent 4mm white metal kits. The stylish Alexander Y-type, workmanlike all-Leyland PLSC3 — priced reasonably at forty-two bob (£2.10p) — assembled in a couple of hours, were left to set overnight and painted the next day. The range grew, producing many types that we had sought desperately for years. Like a bun to a monkey, the toy makers had thrown an occasional sop — a Bedford VAL, BMMO CM5, BUT 9641T trolleybus, Daimler Fleetline/Park Royal, Leyland/Ghia, etc., but none in 4mm. P&D's

general manager was over 50 when EFE launched its 1:76-scale OO gauge models.

Why so many Routemasters?

Surely the most prolific bus of the first postwar decades carried the *standard* RT body: 4,554 RT, 1,631 RTL, 41 provincial (Coventry, St Helens Corporations), total 6,226. Yet of this British icon, it was the French who produced the first decent diecast model. Other than the previously mentioned Triang/Rovex plastic RT — friction-powered, only one front window to the upper-deck, grotty grille — and copied slavishly by the injection-moulding pirates of Hong Kong. Those figures? 6,226 standard RT. How many standard RMs? I make it 2,121. Yet how many RM models have been produced and by how many companies? Yes, I know. Boring. Which brings us back to EFE...

It is said that something is better than nothing. Umm... EFE, for starting with the RT, 10/10; for what we got...6/10. For 17 years, I've been trying to decide if the front dome is too shallow or the upper-deck front windows are too deep? Whichever, the result is lousy. And then there was that large silver lozenge on the bottom of the AEC radiator. It wasn't a number plate because EFE didn't affix such to its models then, unless you paid extra for the

The EFE RT. Besides the inaccurate front dome, one of the most distinctive features of the RT body was its windscreen, though one would never know it from this.

Top right: The EFE utility in the guise of a Birmingham Daimler. The cove panels on this casting are almost as deep as the advert panels. JOHN G. LIDSTONE

Bottom right: The Trux range from Australia includes this splendid representation of a Leyland Tiger OPS2 in Sydney. JOHN G. LIDSTONE

De Luxe series. But the EFE RT was a start, since when has been introduced 30-plus basic models, with detail variations; some good, some very good, some not as good as they should be, some indifferent...

Meantime, Corgi introduced a range of 1:50 scale buses. The first double-decker was a utility body of Park Royal lineage, the initial offering being a Southdown Guy Arab II based, I think, on a bus bodied by Northern Counties. The emergency exit on the 1:1 version was two-piece; in 1:50, Corgi deemed sufficient one-piece. Whoops... and then Corgi went 1:76 with its Original Omnibus Company range, to be followed by ABC/Britbus, Creative Master Northcord, Trux. etc.

It took 17 days to pack my collection for our move from California to Ireland — affording me the opportunity to familiarise myself once again with the good, the bad, and the ugly. My least favourite EFEs are the RT and its silly open-top version (ditto Solido), the Windover coach body (please don't market this same pressing as both a Windover and a Duple) on Bristol chassis where it looks more like a J-series than the L-type it is supposed to represent, the MCCW-bodied Atlantean/Fleetline (messy), but worst of all the utility.

Why so much EFE/OOC duplication of certain types? The Bedford OB, Dennis Dart/Plaxton, MCW Orion and the utility, of which both offerings appear to have been bodied by Duple and both fail in my eyes. EFE oversized the depth of the cove panels, while its abysmal Bristol version appears to be post-1945. And for these inaccuracies we are asked to hand over the best part of £20.

The OOC range reminds me of the Sacramento Kings basketball team. Inconsistent, unpredictable, entertaining, but daring. A result of which has been some stunning models. That OOC Bristol L/ECW? Except it isn't... ECW, that is. Did the masterminds of OOC figure we wouldn't twig their Bristol saloon was an 'L' of a bluff, given that it is based on a BBW body, as built at the Bus Bodybuilding Works of the Bristol Tramways & Carriage Company? To ensure the 'correct' Eastern Coach Works look for both its Bristol K and L releases, Corgi should have examined the same models produced in

the early 1970s by kit manufacturer Brackenborough. Now *that* was the ECW look... and in double-deck form.

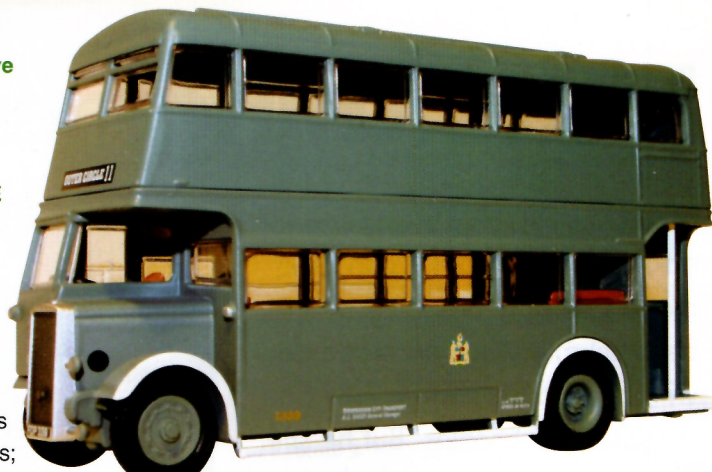
All these diecast models are produced in two halves; lower-deck/top-deck. EFE took advantage of this with its PD-series Leyland Titan, giving us high and lowbridge versions, so why no EFE lowbridge Orion, STL or utility? Why no EFE highbridge Bristol VR or Leyland Titan TD? Likewise OOC, why no highbridge ECW Bristol K or Leyland PD1? Why no lowbridge Orion or utility, and in the Corgi 1:50 range, why no lowbridge versions (Bristol/Daimler/Guy) of this utility body? And didn't St Helens have some lowbridge utility trolleybuses?

The best of the lot

You may well feel I sound like a post-29C ungrateful git? Far from it, and while there have been disappointments, overall I'd like to thank those companies for what they have achieved. While I'm afraid that ABC/Britbus models are overpriced and suffer from poor reproduction, Creative Master Northcord sets the standard to which all other manufacturers should aspire. It has yet to produce a dud, and that Shanghai trolleybus? Wow.

OOC has to be lauded for daring. How else could be categorised its BMMO D9 (brilliant), Blackpool trams, UCC 'Feltham' trams, the Q Type double-deck bus (fantastic)? Other OOCs in my Top 10 are the 4Q4 single-decker, Burlingham Seagull and Q1 trolleybus. But the OOC Bristol K and L and the apparently 8ft-wide utility? Back to the drawing board, chaps.

I find the EFE range somewhat staid 'meat and potatoes', nothing *flambé*. OOC's is more eclectic, especially with provincial examples like



the East Lancs and Roe bodies and the BMMO and Southdown one-offs, whereas EFE plays safe, with too much London representation for my taste. That said, I think EFE's best models are its STL and 10T10, followed by the Bristol LS bus, Leyland PD-series and Harrington Cavalier/Grenadier.

So what would I still like to see appear from the diecast model manufacturers. Above all, the Weymann-bodied AEC Regent III. Twenty-one operators took delivery of the highbridge version, while lowbridge examples went to six companies, excluding two London Transport versions and onward sales to independents. Why has this prototype been overlooked?

Any hot-blooded model bus collector likes Bristols. And in this respect, I'm pushing my luck once more. OOC, if the initial Olympian offering could be re-tooled, then why not also the ECW/Bristol K? While the lowbridge model was in the majority, including

acquisitions eight BTC companies plus a Welsh municipal used the highbridge version; not to mention others on AEC Regent II and Leyland Titan PD1 chassis. Then there is the Bristol KSW. Bodied only by Eastern Coach Works, again most common in lowbridge form with ex-Tilling fleets; 10 companies operated the highbridge version in diverse liveries. And didn't Middlesbrough take this body on Arab III, Sheffield on Leyland PD2/20? Also in my wish list is the all-Leyland Royal Tiger centre entrance coach.

Recent releases of Corgi OOC's admirable Burlingham Seagull coach include this one in Ulsterbus livery.



My wish list for new model castings includes the Northern Coachbuilders body, as on this preserved Northampton Corporation Daimler CVG6.

OOC has been bold with the Roe trolleybus. Teesside has been released; I look forward to Ashton, Derby, Doncaster, Maidstone and Wolverhampton. And why not consider Northern Coachbuilders? It produced a standard body on AEC Regent III, Daimler CV, Guy Arab and Leyland PD-series, as well as on trolleybuses for Bradford, Maidstone, Newcastle (four and six-wheel) and South Shields. The motorbus body wore some wonderful liveries — Aberdeen, Glasgow, Hants & Sussex, Northampton, Newcastle, Northern General and Sheffield to name but a few. And there was a lowbridge version; City of Oxford and Hants & Sussex spring to mind.

I find it unacceptable that such icons cannot be offered while such trivia as the Mercedes-Benz/Plaxton Beaver 2 minibus is available. That is akin to asking a collector of Canaletto to add to his collection a Woolworth's painting-by-numbers view of Venice.

There's room on my shelf for more

I can't speak for everybody's shelf-space, there being room on mine for more 1:50 Corgis. Wanted more than back-teeth implants is a Brighton, Hove & District Bristol K6A utility. And there is space aplenty for more of those

wonderful 1:50 trolleybuses. Why no examples from Belfast, Doncaster, Kingston-upon-Hull, Llanelli, Nerrickshire United (I forgot? Pelham & District is the main bus operator here, Nerrickshire United providing trolleybus service. Where?

Doesn't everybody know Nerrickshire sits twixt Kent and Sussex...?), Pontypridd, South Lancashire, South Shields, Southend, Teesside and that St Helens lowbridge.

Keeping up appurtenances? No. Mirrors? I don't need. Dorian Grey I am not. Many moons ago arrived in the mail EFE LT Museum Set No.1; in transit broken off was a trafficator on the RM. In repacking the collection for the move, guess what kept breaking off? Those dumb out-of-scale mirrors. On reflection...do we need mirrors? What is the cost of tooling, mirror v non-mirror? Weren't we led to believe Chinese production would lead to economies?



The current average price of a 1:76 model is now more than that of 1:50 models when they first appeared. Britbus/CMN/EFE/OOC: shelf-space isn't the problem; lack of disposable income is. And can someone answer this question? The United States is hardly the land of the Routemaster, yet why does the SunStar model retail there at \$109.99, the equivalent of £57.99 and thus a good £30 cheaper than in the UK?

Oh, and CMN/EFE/OOC, it's the AEC Regent III with Weymann bodywork. That's 'K-E-Y-N-S-H...' no, 'A-E-C-R-E-G-E-N-T-3-W-E-Y-M-A-N-N...'.

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Tuesday 31 October.

The correct answers will be entered in a prize draw and we will announce the winners in December *Buses*.



RULES - The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence can be entered into. The prizes are as described and there is no cash alternative. The competition is not open to employees of Ian Allan Publishing or *Buses* magazine. **Strictly only ONE entry permitted per household.**

QUESTIONS

- Which London bodybuilder completed most Routemasters?
☐ Park Royal Vehicles
☐ Park Ward Commercials
☐ Park Lane Motors
- RM664 was silver because it was unpainted. What did the 25 SRM-class Routemasters commemorate in 1977?
☐ 25 years of London Transport
☐ The Queen's silver jubilee
☐ The opening of Silvertown Garage
- For how many years did RM664 run in 'silver'?
☐ 4 ☐ 14 ☐ 44

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Please mark your answers with a tick or cross and attach this coupon (or a photocopy) **TO A POSTCARD or BACK OF A SEALED ENVELOPE** and send to **BUSES Timbercraft Cabinet Competition, Marketing Department, Ian Allan Publishing, Riverdene Business Park, Molesey Road, Hersham, Surrey, KT12 4RG.**



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Making a mess of cultivating the young

JULIAN OSBORNE sighs with near disbelief as a major group alienates some of its potential future customers by increasing children's fares with limited (if any) notice

Back in February 'Service Extra', I wrote of the importance of keeping young passengers on side as they approach car driving age. I mentioned various schemes where operators and councils phase in full adult fares for this group to encourage them to still see the bus as an option in their early car driving years and, hopefully, beyond.

Stagecoach South has come up with a novel way of doing this and started phasing its younger passengers into full adult fares from the age of five. As of 2 July, all child fares on its buses are two thirds of the full fare instead of the previous half. I know there is a constant debate about the logic of child fares, but it has become custom and practice that non-earning youngsters pay less than adults. In recent years, this has had added advantages of keeping school run cars off the road and the possibility of phasing youngsters into full fares and thus keeping them as at least sometime bus users when they start earning and driving. Sudden 40% increases in child fares tend to frustrate these sorts of objectives.

Stagecoach seemed not to publicise the change. The website referred merely to 'reduced fares' for children, buses carried signs saying only 'Revised Fares from 2 July' and I saw no other publicity until the local press started to do it for Stagecoach by featuring, among other things, outraged parents and inadequately-funded children left at the roadside.

The *Surrey Advertiser* was first. It reported Stagecoach as saying that the change was to bring its costings into line with other companies which, unlike Stagecoach, 'don't issue half fares before 09.00 and charge adult fares from age 14'. By the time it reached the *Sussex papers*, the reasons were solely increased fuel and insurance costs.

My son usually uses the buses of Arriva, which serves most of Guildford and issues half-fares (half the adult fare) all day and up to the

16th birthday — but had just taken to using Stagecoach weekly to reach a venue served only by its buses. On 1 July, the return journey cost him £1.75. On 8 July, he was only travelling one way and thinking that £1.50 should be more than enough for a single journey, arrived at the bus stop (a 20min walk away) with that amount. The driver told him that the fare was £1.80, said that the fares had gone up, but not that child fares had increased to two thirds and drove off without him. The press suggests similar scenes occurred all over Stagecoach South. He reached his destination — by car and another 20min walk — 30min late, still not believing that this week's single could be more than last week's return.

Lack of candour about fares is currently matched at Aldershot depot by lack of candour about destinations. An extraordinary number of buses is chugging around with no destination information at all, electronic displays having failed. Arriva has a few like this, but they have boards in the window. On the positive side, Aldershot garage currently has two buses beautifully turned out in traditional Aldershot & District two-tone green.

Taking the direct approach

Over the years, Abingdon, the home of my parents-in-law, has featured periodically in this column. When they first moved there, most buses to Oxford followed historic routes along the old A34 or via places like Kennington and Radley. In the late 1990s, soundings started to be taken on whether there was a market for more direct services using the mid-1970s A34 dual carriageway (i.e. the way you would drive).

As events have proved, this market turned out to be huge and Oxford Bus Company now runs buses this way every 10min on weekdays and every 15min on Sundays. We used the service one June Sunday and were delighted to travel on such busy buses both ways.

Incidentally, of our children, only our 16-year-old daughter had to pay full fare and the child fare of our 14-year-old was slightly less than half that. I suppose Stagecoach's new fares will make the transition to adult rates easier but I fear a significant proportion of a whole generation of future customers will have been priced off buses by then.

Matters of integration...or not

A colleague in National Express contacted me after reading my June column about integrated transport. He tells me that as his hovercraft from Portsmouth reached the shore at Ryde on the Isle of Wight, every bus in the bus station started up and cleared off. On checking the timetable, he discovered that this was exactly what was supposed to happen. Integrated transport at its best? Talking of Portsmouth, I must devote some space soon to detailing the generally excellent First operation in the city, with some of the most helpful drivers I've met anywhere.

But to extend our geographical coverage here, I'll end with some news from farther north. Another colleague, who works for one of the big groups in Cheshire, tells me that the county council there no longer provides temporary bus stops when roadworks disrupt services, because of the costly risk assessment required for each one. If one of the huge number of organisations now able to dig up the road digs a hole in the middle of a route, passengers are forced to trek to the nearest unaffected stop. So no risk assessment of 100 standees in a bendibus, but detailed analysis of risks from a one-week temporary stop. Hmm.

And now some good news. On 15 June, I travelled from Rugby to Leicester on a route of Woods of Wigston, a small operator providing council-supported services with minibuses. But well-maintained, smartly presented ones — and mine had a friendly and helpful driver.

Oxford Bus Company 899 (HF06 FTY), one of the Mercedes-Benz Citaros transferred from Wilts & Dorset to enhance the Abingdon-Oxford Direct service after Stagecoach withdrew its competing route, on which it used Pointer Darts. BOB BELCHER





PTEs should think twice

As the members, officers and staff of the respective PTA/PTEs have to work with and apply the policies, regulations and legislation of whichever government is currently in office, many may consider that their present penchant for political lobbying and gesturing is more than a little misplaced.

It also appears that it may be necessary to remind those currently in charge at the PTEs of the damage done in the years preceding deregulation through the National Bus Company's various Market Analysis Project programmes. Many of these programmes were sponsored and encouraged by the PTEs themselves in order to achieve a temporarily greater market share for their own directly operated services. It is very easy for recall to be highly selective in circumstances such as these.

J. Walford Brewood
Huddersfield

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Deregulate London, don't regulate our other large cities

When, oh when, is somebody to whom the movers and shakers might listen, rather than my lone whinge, going to explode the myth that if the rest of the country could only follow Mayor Ken Livingstone's path in the capital, joyous motorists would abandon their cars in droves, patronage on buses would equal the hordes being conveyed throughout Greater London, all the right boxes would be ticked for various government departments, and we would all live happily ever after? It is complete and utter rot.

London, I grudgingly have to admit, is a special case. I think it should have been deregulated at the same time as everybody else, and by now, as in many other parts of the country, services would have found their correct level in matching demand, and not be an enormous burden on London council taxpayers, a fact always conveniently overlooked, to a current figure fast approaching £1 billion, I believe. How such well used buses, operating in many populated areas for 24hr a day, can lose money on this scale leaves one to suspect revenue protection procedures to be in need of some drastic overhaul.

There are no closed coalmines in Ilford, shut steel works in Southall, nor mile upon mile of abandoned heavy engineering factories in Catford. Doncaster does not have a Tower of London, Leeds a Buckingham Palace, nor can you gawp at the changing of the guard in Huddersfield.

London has an enormous, all-year tourist trade, many world famous 'must do' attractions and is a base for the millions

making day trips to Windsor, Oxford and Stratford-upon-Avon. It is also a 24hr city (horror of horrors), but the most critical factor in swelling the ever-increasing numbers of bus passengers, and let us not mince our words too finely, is the huge influx of immigrants. When many indigenous Londoners move elsewhere, they are being replaced by many more people from overseas, most of whom wish to live in the London area because the region's service industries employ vast numbers.

A few years ago, the residents of South Yorkshire were threatened with a huge council tax surcharge in order to pay for losses incurred in the building of the relatively small Sheffield Supertram system. Doncaster and Barnsley residents were particularly annoyed as we saw little benefit. It was the second time I had been caught up in this way, as Bromley Council had challenged Ken Livingstone to a duel in the early 1980s when residents were expected to pay for Underground fare reductions, yet the borough, including villages such as Cudham, Pratts Bottom and Downe, lay a considerable distance from such luxuries.

Can you imagine what will happen if the PTEs (at the very least) get their way, and tender whole bus networks once more, possibly becoming liable to compensation payments for ousting perfectly good existing operators at the same time? Healthy competition in Sheffield, south Manchester and numerous other places has brought fares and service levels back once more (in many urban areas) to a respectable level, and if the dead hand of re-regulation is allowed to come about, we will be paying a lot more than a one-off surcharge.

Terence Uden
Woking

.....

Noisy modern Volvo double-deckers

To a diehard Routemaster enthusiast, one of the few benefits that the type's withdrawal from London was expected to produce was a reduction in traffic noise. Yet this year's hot summer weather seems to have brought out the worst in terms of the noise produced by some of its successors — notably Volvo B7TLs, though Dennis Tridents weren't exactly quiet, either. During the heat wave in July in particular, the sound produced by some of these vehicles seemed more intrusive than anything Routemasters ever inflicted.

I'm talking about what I assume to be the thermostatically controlled engine cooling systems on these vehicles. The very high ambient temperatures here in London in July seemed to wind these systems up to fever pitch, causing the engine compartments to emit an unfamiliar and

almost shockingly loud noise — far louder than the normal sound of the engine and drivetrain alone. I would characterise it as a strident roar. When two or three buses were arriving or leaving together, all with cooling systems evidently running on maximum, the cacophony was horrendous.

The noise varied from one vehicle to the next. Sometimes so you could find one Volvo pulling away from a bus stop quite quietly, while an identical one behind it drove off to the accompaniment of an ear-splitting howl. At its worst, it put me in mind of the wailing sound produced by Leyland PDR Atlanteans of the 1960s when they were being driven too hard in a low gear, or two-stroke General Motors Detroit Diesel bus engines at the height of a New York heat wave.

Clearly without proper sound measuring equipment, any assertion about noise is subjective. All I can say is that the sound of these buses around the Putney area, which can hardly be unique, was truly an assault on the eardrums. Travelling inside them was no better; the rear compartment of the lower deck was basically a no-talking zone (you couldn't hear the reply).

Understandably, the designers probably didn't anticipate the kind of 30deg temperatures London saw regularly this summer, but I'd hate to have to live with these buses in environments where such weather is more common.

Hopefully, the new B9TL will be quieter, but that will be of little consolation to those of us who will presumably have to endure the extremely intrusive sound of existing vehicles on every really hot summer's day for years to come.

Peter Rowlands
Enfield

● *We have heard similar reports of noisy B7TLs in other places and not necessarily in extreme heat. Any thoughts, readers? — Ed.*

Opening top-deck front windows

I do not know whether opening front upper deck windows across the windscreen are now illegal. (See picture right) But I can tell you that they are banned by Transport for London — which may amount to the same thing given TfL's influence on British bus design nowadays. TfL told me they were banned 'for safety reasons'. No further explanation was forthcoming.

Doesn't it make you proud of the generations of our predecessors who daily climbed the stairs on such buses, impervious to the mortal dangers they faced? How brave they were. We shall not see their like again.

Neil Babbs
Enfield

Remembering the Plaxton 321

I was interested to read James Prince's write-up of the Plaxton 321-bodied Leyland Tiger (The Coach Parc last month). I well remember going up to Yeates at Loughborough for the launch of this 'new' vehicle. The thing that sticks in my mind most was the appalling gearchange on the coach I drove that day, which had a ZF six-speed manual — some of the 321s I think were automatics. I struggled with it. I had driven other earlier Tigers with the same 'box, and while the ZF six-speed manual could be tricky, I don't remember Tigers generally being that bad.

Tony Harvey of Yeates insisted it was all down to my driving, and turfed me out of the seat to put on a bravura performance, but then I suspect he had had time to get used to its oddities, and of course I was left wondering whether there was a problem that Tony was so anxious to disprove.

I commented on the gearchange in my report in *Buses* at the time, which upset someone at ZF, who reckoned it was nothing to do with the gearbox but more to do with the installation. He encouraged me to have a go in a Dennis Javelin, and as Dennis had one it needed moving from Berkhof at Aldershot to its premises in Guildford I did just that. The Javelin chassis always looked to have been built around the gearchange, which involved a massive steel pole from the bottom of the gear lever to the box, and it was a delight to drive.

It's odd that smaller manufacturers seemed to tame the ZF box better than the bigger manufacturers; it could be tricky in AEC Reliances and even in Volvo B10Ms, but the Javelin was the best installation I had driven since — wait for it — the Ward Dalesman. It seems these manufacturers turned to ZF to design the linkage, and on that Javelin I really sensed the gearbox was, as you might expect, a piece of German precision engineering, whereas getting second gear even on a B10M could sometimes be a shoulder-wrenching experience.

I gather two problems afflicted the gearchange on the 321s. One was that when Leyland moved to Cummins engines, the gear linkage had to be altered from the original design for its own TL11H and became

convoluted in the process. I was also told that these Tiger chassis had stood outside waiting for someone to body them for about two years — as James Prince says, those were difficult times for the coach industry. I wonder then how Bebb's drivers got on with them after they had stood for another two years before sale?

**Stephen Morris
Shepperton**

Not quite the end of Leopards and X-types

It isn't quite the end of two long eras in Northern Ireland (*Buses* last month). While it is true that there are no longer any Leyland Leopards or Alexander X-types still in passenger carrying service, it doesn't mean that the types have finally retired from service in the province.

Unlike most major operators in Great Britain, Ulsterbus and Metro still operate their own fleets of depot towcars/recovery vehicles, using former buses fitted out as mobile workshops and complete with towing equipment. There are currently 19 such vehicles, of which 18 are Leopards. Three are former Scottish Bus Group vehicles with Alexander (Falkirk) Y-type bodies acquired originally as driver trainers. The other 15 are indigenous and have Alexander (Belfast) X-type bodies. Both types have had their bodywork shortened by the removal of the bays behind the rear axle, but are still easily recognisable as the buses they once were.

And the 19th vehicle? This is none other than Ulsterbus's last remaining, in service Bedford YLQ complete with original length X-type body, fleetnumber 4878 (formerly 1878: LOI 1878). It is currently the Armagh depot towcar.

**Bill Wilkinson
Newcastle Upon Tyne**

Perils of web-based translations

May I, as chairman of the professional body for Welsh translators, pick up Richard Delahoy's

point (On the Net last month) about the foibles of web-based translation programs to urge bus companies to be very wary of adding such facilities to their websites? Lacking intelligence, they all too often produce garbage. In a recent example in Wales, 'cyclists' on a road sign was translated into the Welsh for 'bladder inflammation'. 'Cyclists' had presumably been mistyped as 'cycists', which a translation program then miscorrected to 'cystitis', an inflammation of the bladder. Be warned.

**Berwyn Prys Jones
Cardiff**

Low emission, higher fuel consumption

Alan Townsin (*Buses* August) suggests that he may be 'unfashionable' and that he may be a 'grumpy old man'. Guilty as charged — and thank goodness.

Mr Townsin's article was, as always, well observed and soundly reasoned. In particular, he hit the nail on the head when he commented that 'the Disability Discrimination Act has had some strange and even counter-productive effects'. The remark could equally well have been made about many other pieces of well intentioned but ill-thought-out legislation.

Emission levels for vehicle engines continue to be tightened and manufacturers are now developing engines to meet Euro5 limits in 2008/09. Ever-tighter limits on particulate matter and oxides of nitrogen must, we are told, be good for the environment and well worth the costs of attaining them. These costs come in many forms: the cost of designing, developing, manufacturing and maintaining these increasingly sophisticated engines as well increased weight and, crucially with engines up to Euro3, fuel consumption.

That is the paradox: with few exceptions, tighter emission limits have been met at the cost of increased fuel consumption and thus increased CO₂ emissions. In terms of vehicle emission legislation, CO₂ is unregulated even though we are told that hydrocarbon fuels are a limited resource and CO₂ emissions are responsible for climate change, which is supposedly the biggest challenge to the world today.

Don't blame the engine manufacturers: their efforts are of necessity concentrated on meeting arbitrary emission limits, whereas left to get on with the job they would set about gaining competitive advantage by developing engines with traditional virtues — light, compact, smooth, quiet, durable, flexible and fuel-efficient. Think of a Gardner, which had been developed along such lines for the past 20 years. Des Maybury of The Big Bus Company isn't being sentimental when, like many others, he reflects wistfully (*News*, August) on the fuel consumption delivered by his old Gardner engines compared with their politically correct Euro3 replacements.

Has emissions legislation really produced a better all-round package for the environment? I think not, but perhaps I'm an unfashionable grumpy old man too.

**Stuart McPherson
Dunblane**

Below: Opening front upper deck windows on Arriva London 126 (F126 PHM), a 1988 Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus, at Euston in March 1999.



Unfair about York 'ftr'

Most, if not all, of the articles and letters in recent *Buses*, making comments about the new StreetCars in York appear to have been written by persons who have not even used it or have been on one day — it seems the first week — and all appear to lack the basics in making sound judgment.

By referring to 'WorstGroup', Tim Hall (You Write, July) does not even use the correct name of the company, seems to lack knowledge of bus operation and relies too much on the written word rather than facts. The company to which he is trying to refer is FirstGroup plc. However, he has no idea obviously that the company running the 'ftr' is First York Buses Ltd. Also Tim Hall, StreetCar 19001 has a paint job designed by an undergraduate design student and has a theme to it. They are not for you to criticise.

Items outside First York control, by the way, affected the launch. It was a road blockage (an accident) and 'ftr' being hemmed into bays that were the initial troubles, then the ticket machines worked slower than required. First York soon corrected all this.

In your news report in June *Buses*, a fair description of the 'ftr' is given but the gaps in the service were soon reduced. In any case, why pick on the 'ftr'? The writer could get endless examples of probably all bus companies with some gaps in their services, usually because of congestion and other reasons. In fact, I can easily come up with one in respect of a so-called 'quality' operator — whatever that means — which has a 10min service with buses in bunches of twos and threes (even four sometimes) and this is not a new articulated bus or revamped service. As for the middle photo in that report, showing people waiting at Acomb shops, what does that show? It's just a queue, and I see longer ones daily on a First Bradford service also running every 10min — and on time.

As for Andrew Braddock's Inside Track (August *Buses*), why all the abbreviations? The Wright StreetCar service is designated 'ftr', which can be either an abbreviation or just a model type. The use of one does not or should not give Mr Braddock a reason to even mention it at all, let alone almost a page full. He has overlooked the thousands used daily elsewhere and all those used in the bus industry like MAN, Bristol/Leyland chassis codes, VOSA etc. Why not pick on Alexander's ALX?

I would also take him up on the matter of bus shelters and bus stops. Is it necessary to renew them? In any case, surely this comes under the council, not First York. He is also a little too forward with his railway station remarks. The service 4 is an existing service used mainly by existing passengers, not by tourists. Therefore, I see no reason to give the service more attention than any other at that point.

On the subject of ticket machines, yes they are quite lawful. There is no law above ticket issuing or content. In the past, many small operators used plain tickets with no names and more recently some drivers borrow ticket rolls from another company. The information still goes to the issuing companies' records. The only problem might be with all-day tickets, but these are matters for the bus companies.

The article on Uni-link in August *Buses* gives some ideas of what students think other people think of them. Interesting, then, that the ticket machines on 'ftr' are not as difficult for passengers from Acomb as they are to students. Note that Leeds, Norwich, Bradford and other cities do not need a Uni-link.

Despite the troubles on the first few days not being the fault of 'ftr', apart from slow ticket machines, the service has in fact been a success. Ignore the comments from a disgruntled few. Most users like it and it is working well and First York is improving any downsides.

As for Chris Hough (You Write, August), he too has not looked at the reasons for the initial write-ups on the 'ftr'. First West Yorkshire does have York's experience to look at as any problems that may raise for Leeds. But congestion should not have any more effect on the StreetCars than on the current buses. Apart from that, it is up to the ticket machine manufacturers; the machines' position may not be ideal, but there may be other reasons why they are near the door.

As for standees in Leeds, I do not see any of them waiting for the next bus. They stand. And 'ftr' not like a tram ride? Well, leave out StreetCar and it is, after all, an articulated bus with better design.

**Richard W. Bainton
Shipley**

More courtesy in Derbyshire

The heading 'Courtesy in Derbyshire' to Esther John's letter (You Write last month) has reminded me of my sister-in-law's experience a year or so ago. She accidentally left a book on a Trent Barton bus. When phoning the office, she was asked from where she was calling. Replying that she was at work in the centre of Buxton, she was asked if she could wait at a nearby bus stop in 10min time. A bus duly arrived and the driver handed her the lost book. Service indeed.

**John Batten
Heaton Norris, Stockport**

Free travel in Norfolk

After reading Philip Mountford's letter (You Write last month) about free travel for the over-60s, I realised how lucky I am to be in the next county to him. I live on the outskirts of Norwich and can travel on any bus that starts or finishes in Norfolk. So far, I have been to Peterborough (Cambs), Spalding (Lincs) and Lowestoft (Suffolk).

It is also possible to go Cambridge, Ipswich via Diss and Bury St Edmunds via Thetford, which I will be doing soon, plus the towns in and around the county and coast. Not bad for a rural county. The free travel is an enthusiast's dream and I hope to go farther in 2008 when it becomes countrywide. In the meantime, I will happily pay for travel outside Norfolk.

On another topic (tutting and huffing) from the same letters page, I always say 'thank

you' to the driver when getting off and nearly always get a 'thanks' or 'bye' in return, so it is still done in Norfolk.

**Tony Holland
Norwich**

Breakthrough for South Cambridgeshire?

Further to my letter published last month, I have just read in the *Cambridge Evening News* that, thanks to a campaign by that newspaper, individuals and organisations and local MPs, the anomalies are now being sorted out and it is hoped that free off-peak travel for seniors and disabled will be available in a few weeks' time throughout Cambridgeshire, Peterborough unitary authority and the 'border towns' such as Newmarket and Saffron Walden.

**Philip Mountford
Orwell, Cambs**

Chelmsford, of course

Does your spell check have a preference for Cheltenham over Chelmsford? I refer to the caption for the photograph on Fleet News, p48 last month.

**Lee Whitehead
Chelmsford**

● *Sorry, I can't blame the software. Entirely a slip of the editor's hand. The First Essex Scania's all operate on the Chelmsford park-&-ride, — Ed.*

Anywhere but Merseyside

It is bad enough that colleagues of mine based in London believe that Stockport is in Cheshire and Bolton is in Lancashire, because their full postal addresses still suggest they are, but when I saw that the article 'A Merseyside makeover' in July *Buses* was about Warrington, I nearly choked on my tea.

What will the residents of what — since 1998 — has been a unitary authority think? Poor dears, they already suffered apoplexy when what had traditionally been a good Lancastrian town was moved by whim of local government reorganisation in 1974 into Cheshire. Now you are suggesting the borough is part of Merseyside. It never has been, and (continental drift notwithstanding), it never will be. I suppose you also think that Halton is in Merseyside.

**Paul J. Smith
Bury**

● *We knew all along that Warrington isn't politically or administratively in the former county of Merseyside, but it lies on the River Mersey and 'Merseyside Makeover' alliterated in a way that 'Unitary (or Warrington) Makeover' doesn't. — Ed.*

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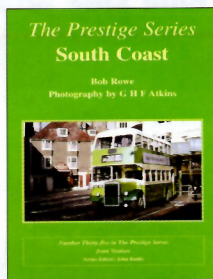
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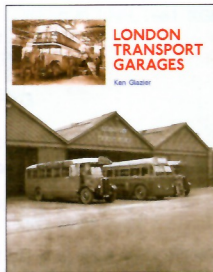
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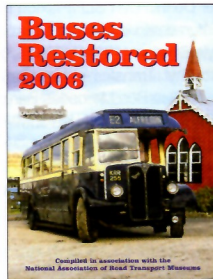
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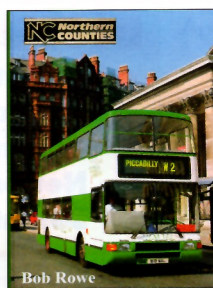
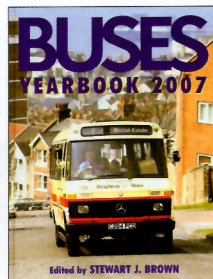
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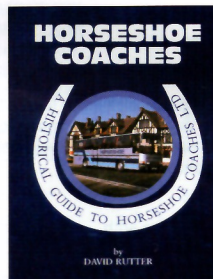
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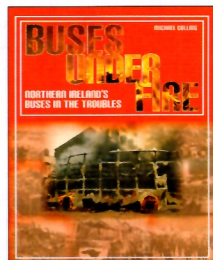
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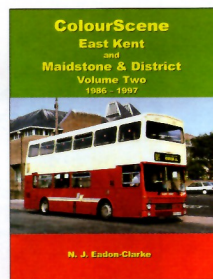
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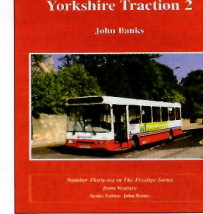
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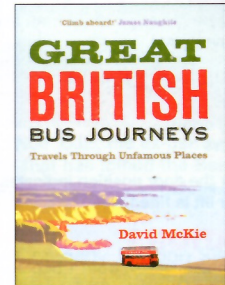


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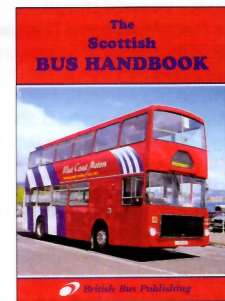
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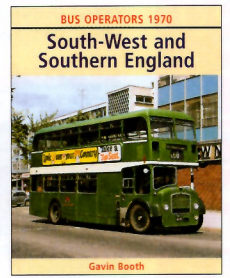
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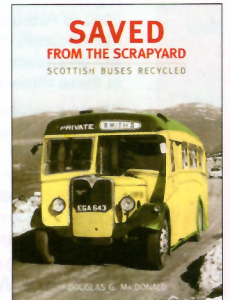
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IN FLEET NEWS THIS MONTH

- **Brighton & Hove withdraws Berkhof Lances**
- **Godson scraps first Southdown Leyland National**
- **Green Bus to withdraw last Leopards**
- **Network Colchester rennumbers fleet**
- **Solent Blue Line name to disappear**

BODY TYPE

AB	Articulated single-deck bus
AC	Articulated coach
B	Rigid single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats in a bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other double-deckers are H (highbridge) regardless of overall height.
M	Minibus
O	Permanent open-top
CO	Convertible open-top
PO	Partial open-top

SEATING CAPACITY

For double-deckers, this is shown with the upper deck capacity first (e.g. 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where the split is not known, a total figure (e.g. 73) is shown in the same style as for single-deckers. The total seating capacity shown includes all fixed and tip-up seats. The vehicles themselves may show other permutations of seats, standing spaces and wheelchair capacity.

DOOR POSITION

F	Front (can be directly behind front axle on vehicles with no front overhang)
R	Rear
RD	Rear with platform doors
C	Centre
D	Dual (two) doors
T	Triple doors

The letter 't' after the door position indicates the provision of a toilet, while 'L' after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

REGISTRATIONS

Registration numbers issued from 1 September 2001 show a two-letter area identification code (e.g. BU for Birmingham, CU for Swansea, SX for Inverness), followed by a two-digit code indicating the period of first registration (e.g. 51 for September 2001 to February 2002, 02 for March to August 2002, 52 for September 2002 to February 2003, 03 for March to August 2003 and so on. These are followed by a three-letter identification of the vehicle itself. In 'Fleet News', a batch of vehicles with consecutively issued registrations will be shown in the following fashion: LS34-46 (GG51 PYS/T/V-Z, PZB-F/H). The letters I and Q are not used in these three-letter combinations.

Where a vehicle has been re-registered, its previous registration number(s) (where known) follow in *italic* type (e.g. RM48 (LDS 199A, *VLT 48*), with the most recent given first.

Aardvark Coaches, Peterborough

Acquired is ex-Arriva North West Leyland Olympian/ECW H45/32F B149 TRN.

ACE Travel, Aintree

Leyland Atlantean AN68/1R/Alexander DKC 300L has been sold for preservation to the Wigan Bus Group.

Alpine, Llandudno

Duple 425 coach D325 ACK has been re-registered BJZ 6751.

Alrite, Middlesbrough

Optare MetroRider N413 NTN is red with a purple band and white lining, with ATL fleetnames, reminiscent of the livery once used by Doncaster Transport.

Ambassador Travel, Great Yarmouth

An unusual arrival is ex-Arriva Derby Volvo Citybus/Marshall H45/33F B140 GAU. Scania K113/Van Hool 203/4 (TIL 9217, N824 DKU) have gone to Semmence, Wymondham.

Anglian, Beccles, Suffolk

Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW DPH42/28F B912 NBF and ONLXB/1RH/ECW H42/30F C75 CHM have been acquired from Sanders, Holt, but Alexander Dennis Enviro300 AU55 DYO has gone to Huntingdon & District. All post-1994 vehicles here now run on bio diesel fuel.

Apollo 8 Travel, Kendal

New is Mercedes-Benz Vario O814/KVC B28F SN06 KRZ.

APT, Rayleigh, Essex

Former Golden Boy, Hoddesdon Mercedes-Benz 709D K392 BVS is here.

Arriva Cymru AA

Former Arriva Manchester Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 7558 (R558 ABA) has entered service at Llandudno Junction, while Dart/Carlyle Dartline 1133 (G123 RGT) was a surprising reallocation to Rhyl. Transferred from Arriva North West at Bolton are ex-Blue Bus Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F 395-8 (V951 KAG, MV02 XYJK, MK52 XNS).

Step-entrance Dart/Plaxton Pointers 1106-10/2/4/5 (L936-40 GYL, J312 WHU, J314/5 WVX) have been withdrawn.

Arriva London AA

Official Sightseeing Tour MCW Metroliners ML15/6 (B115 ORU, C906 GUD) have been sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

Arriva Midlands AA

The rest of the VDL DB250/Wright Pulsar Gemini double-deckers for Leicester are 4753-8 (FJ06 ZSY/Z, ZTB-E). The first of the Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini reported are 4003/5 (FJ06 ZPV/W).

Mercedes-Benz 709D 1376 (N376 XRC) has been sold to Pickford, Chippenham. Leyland Olympian/Optare 4558 (E158 OMD) has gone to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap and 4559 (E159 OMD) to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

Arriva North East AA

Transferred to Northumbria are Optare MetroRider/B31F 909 (R909 JNL) from Arriva Scotland West and DAF DB250/Northern Counties 7449 (R206 CKO) from Arriva Kent & Sussex, converted to single-door (seating split to be confirmed); 7451 (R208 CKO) has gone away for single-door conversion.

East Lancs-bodied Volvo Olympians are expected at Bishop Auckland, to replace recently acquired Leyland Olympian/ECW 7211/4/23/4 (C102 CHM, D187, 203, 146

FYM) and Leyland Lynx 5019 (H338 TYG). Off-route Olympian/East Lancs 7429 (M693 HPF) has been de-roofed by the Albert Bridge in Middlesbrough.

Leyland Olympian/Alexander 7273/4 (L274 FVN) — respectively Northumbria and Durham County buses — and DAF DB250 7450 (R207 CKO) were lent to Arriva Scotland West in July to operate shuttles to and from the T in the Park rock event. 7274 appeared to have been transferred permanently by August, when MCW Metrobus DR101s 620/1/3/4 (WLT 954, A954 SUL; A959 SYF; B112/6 WUL) and ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RHs 7214/23 (D187, 203 FYM) were also operating in Scotland.

Former Arriva London Olympian 7277 (J353 BSH), at Bishop Auckland, remains in London red.

Optare MetroRider 878/82 (N878/82 RTN) have become crew ferries 9962/3 at Stockton.

DAF SB220GS/Plaxton Prestige 4029 (R429 RPY) was destroyed by fire on 8 August. MAN 11.190/Optare Vectas 1552/4 (M501/3 AJC), under cannibalisation for three years, may return to traffic, but similar 512 (K512 BHN), DAF SB220/Optare Delta 4013 (K413 BHN) and Leyland Lynx 5020 (H338 UWT) are withdrawn and SB220/Delta 4006 (J866 UPY) is being cannibalised.

Arriva North West AA

Runcorn Busway-allocated Scania N113CRL/Wright Pathfinders 2048-54 (RDZ 1708-14) have been refurbished, with centre exits removed and Hanover LED destination displays fitted.

Mercedes-Benz 711D 148 (P658 KEY) was the last minibus at Winsford. Leyland Lynx 1752 (H254 PAJ) has become driver trainer 8174 (not 8176 as expected) at Bootle. 3837 (N716 TPK), the last Dennis Dominator built and the last in the fleet, has moved to Winsford.

Dennis Dart SLF 7558 (R558 ABA) has been transferred to Arriva Cymru.

Surprisingly, recently refurbished Dennis Dart/Wadham Stringer Portsdown 1139 (J556 GTP) has been withdrawn, as have Dart/Carlyle 1132 (G122 RGT), Dart/East Lancs 1148 (J701 NHA), DAF SB220/Ikarus Citibus 1790-4 (K130-3 TCP, K510 RJX), Leyland Olympian/ECW 3071/3, 3122 (B251 NVN, B513 LFP, C212 GTU), Olympian/East Lancs 3146/7/9 (G916/7/9 LHA), Olympian/Northern Counties 3206/12/3/8/62/3/6 (G506/12/3 SFT, G758 UYT, F262/3/6 YTJ) and Volvo Citybuses 3646/50/2/74/6-8 (G661 DTJ, G650/2 EKA, F104/6-8 TML).

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Mellor 355 (R962 FYS), sold to Stafford Bus Centre (dealer), dealers have taken Mercedes 147 (J3 SLT), Leyland Lynx 1743 (G49 CVC) and Leyland Olympians 3224/64 (G524 WJF, F264 YTJ), while Ensign (dealer), Purfleet has sold Volvo Citybuses 3690/2 (H660/2 GPF) to Dunn-Line.

Arriva Southern Counties AA

Arriva London North articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaro O530G/AB49T MA21 (BX04 MXV) was borrowed for clearance tests on Fastrack routes A and B.

Kent County Council-owned Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton 3953 (GJ52 HDZ) arrived from Metrobus in August.

Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointer 3609 (L609 EKM) has gone to Arriva Southend, Mercedes-Benz 711D 1475 (P475 DPE) is withdrawn and Leyland Swift driver trainers T162/6/9 (J162 REH, H166 MEA, J169 REH) have been sold to Erith Commercials (dealer), Dartford.

Arriva the Shires & Essex AA

More new VDL SB120/Wright Cadet B28D are 3716-28 (YE06 HRJ, HPA/C/F/J-L/N-P/U, HNT/U) for Harrow local routes H18/19.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 2122/58/9 (N192 EMJ, N366/7 JGS) have been withdrawn after a period in store at Ware. 709D 2124 (N194 EMJ) has gone to Baker, Weston super Mare, 2158 (N366 JKS) and 811Ds 2408/9 (M455/6 UUR) are with Pickford, Chippenham, Mercedes-Benz Vario 2375 (R945 VPU) with Arriva North East. Bristol VRT 5000 (BKE 847T) has been sold for preservation.

Arriva the Shires and Essex - MK Metro renumbered

The MK Metro fleet has been renumbered as follows:

MK Metro no	Arriva no	Registration	Type
1-33	2431-4/18-23/35/24-8/36-44/ 7/8/5/6/29/30/49/50	S401-4 ERP, T405-10 ENV, S903 DUB, V412/3 UNH, W414-6 KNH, X417-9 BBD, V82 EVU, MK02 BUS, KU02 JXT, W681 DDN, YN53 SVG, YN04 LXM, YJ05 JXU/V, YN03 NEF, NCF, T45 KAW, X351 AUX, YJ55 YGV/W R809 WJA	Optare Solo
43	3520		Dennis Dart SLF/UVG UrbanStar
44	3510	V897 DNB	Dennis/Plaxton Super Pointer Dart/Plaxton
45-48	3521-4	HDZ 2611/07/5/4 (R511-4 SJM)	Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer
49-58	3525/37/26-33	W986 WDS, HDZ 2606 R808 WJA, HX51 LSO, W3 CTS, NDZ 7935/3/19/26/1/18 T410/06/ 9/22/3/04 LGP	Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano or UVG
59-61	3729-31	KX54 AVE/D, YG52 CMU	DAF SB120/ Wright Cadet
62-4	3534-6	T408/25/4 LGP	Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano
80-8	3620-8	S340 SET, YN55 PZY/Z, YN06 JXJ-M/O/P	Scania L94UB/Wright
107-31	2285-2309	R107-10 DNV, R825 MJU, R112/3 DNV, R826 MJU,	Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver
2		R949 AMB, R116-21 DNV, S122 KBD, T93 JBA, S124 KBD, T125-7 LRP, V128 UNH, T581 KGB, R824/7 MJU M53 PRA	
141 B10M/Alexander 202	3076 6038	F302 FYG	Volvo Q-type (driver trainer) DAF DB250/Optare Spectra
216/24/36	5163/4/6	F116/24/36 PHM	Volvo Citybus/Alexander RV-type
416/9/20/3/4/8	3511-3/5/6/9	L711/09 JUD M10 CLA, N133/4 XND, M801 OJW	Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer
421/6	3514/7	J941 MFT, K379 RTY	Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus
601-5/7 606/8/9	1241-6 2099, 2100/2	T701-5, 622 RBX K426/8/19 FAV	Renault Trafic/Cymric Mercedes-Benz 709D/Marshall
611 620/1 653	2103 2061/2 1240	F393 DHL YX04 GBE/F RX53 RYW	Mercedes-Benz 709D LDV Convoy/Excel Renault Master/Rohill

Dennis Dart/Carlyle 427 (H858 NOC) was numbered 3518 but is withdrawn.

Ashall, Salford

Latest acquisitions are Mercedes-Benz Vario O810D/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F 114 (P251 RUM) from Dukes Travel and Optare MetroRider/B31F 127/8 (M627/8 WBV) and B29F 130 (M630 WBV) from Blackburn Transport to cover for extra services in the Farnworth and Bolton areas relinquished by Arriva North West. Thanks to proprietor Ken Savage for this update on his fleet.

Autocar, Five Oak Green, Kent

Ex-Ulsterbus Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus DP39F CAZ 6619 was on loan from Wealden PSV, Five Oak Green (dealer) and went on to Chalkwell, Sittingbourne, following ex-Ulsterbus Leyland Tiger/Duple 340 C53Ft OXI 532 here, which went on to Plan-it Travel, Otford. Former Stagecoach North West Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) B25F K872 GHH has also been on loan.

Below: Arriva Yorkshire 1601 (YJ06 WLZ) is numerically the first of 13 East Lancs Myllennium Lowlander-bodied VDL DB250s for the Leeds-Dewsbury-Huddersfield corridor. **RUSSELL YOUNG**



Avro, Orsett, Essex

Acquired from Ensign (dealer), Purlfleet is ex-New World First Bus Dennis Condor/Duple Metsec H529 PVW (EN 8257).

Baker, Biddulph

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F 195 (Y783 WHH) has been acquired from Reay, Wigton. Scania L113CRL/Wright Access-ultralow 194 (N162 KPS) has been re-registered 9595 RU.

Bebb, Llantwit Fardre **VE**

A further Optare Solo is M850/Slimline B27F CN06 BXS in full Bebb livery, with no outward indication of Veolia branding. Solo CE52 UWU awaits disposal, while similar CE52 UWT/X/Y have been transferred to Dunn-Line. The last private hire vehicle in the fleet, Mercedes-Benz/Autobus Nouvelle CE52 UWP, has gone.

Beeston, Hadleigh, Suffolk

Additions are YN06 CJE, a Scania OmniCity former demonstrator, and Scania K114/Van Hool 222 GRA (YN04 ANV). Optare Solo YN53 YGY has gone to South Lancs, Atherton and Scania N113DRB/East Lancs Cityzen S333 HEB to Cedar, Bedford.



Above: YN06 CJE, the ex-demonstrator Scania OmniCity that has joined the Beeston's of Hadleigh fleet in Suffolk. **COLIN HUMPHREY**

Big Bus Company, London SW17

The Philadelphia Trolley Works has taken over operation of the Big Bus Tour of Philadelphia, retaining Big Bus identity as a franchise operation, along with Daimler/Leyland Fleetlines KLL 898, 902N (GHV 7, 41N), KJD 109P, KUC 979P, OJD 205, 376/96R and THX 534S.

Birmingham Coach Company **GA**

Further to July Fleet News, Dennis Dart/Marshall B40F M803/12/5 GFT have been transferred from Go North East, with similar M804-7/9/13/8/9 GFT and N117-24 WBR and Plaxton Pointer-bodied L315 XBB, M890-2 GBB and M810-2/4/5 HCU expected to follow.

Ex-London General Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B36D P739 RYL is here from Oxford Bus Company.

Blackburn Transport

Agreement has been reached for Transdev to take over this council-owned company (see News this month).

Blackpool Transport

New Dennis Trident/East Lancs Myllennium Lolyne H47/30F 328-32 (PF06 EZL-P) are operating Line 11 as planned.

More Leyland Atlanteans withdrawn are 355/6/9 (A355/6/9 HHG). 359 was already out of service with a defective engine. Lytham Club Day on 24 June saw what may be the last use of Atlanteans here in any quantity, 353/7/8/61/2 (UHG 353Y, A357/8/61/5 HHG) appearing on Line 7 in place of the usual Optare Excels to provide additional capacity.

Brighton & Hove **GA**

Delivery has started of 12m Scania N94UD OmniDekkas/East Lancs H51/37F 901-18 (YN56 FFA-E/G/H/J-M/O/P/R-V), named Charles Burt Brill, Fanny Burney, Douglas Byng, Sir John Clements, Rev Richard Enraght, James Gray, Patrick Hamilton, Thomas Harrington, Trevor Kaye, Thomas Lainson, Fred Lillywhite, Mick Mannock, Pete McCarthy, Daisy Noakes, Dr William Parker, Ben Sherman, Sir Hans Singer and Rex Whistler respectively. They are for Metro service 25. Scania N113DRB/East Lancs Cityzens 751-8 are losing Metro25 green vinyls as a result.

All five Berkhof-bodied Dennis Lance SLFs acquired from Stagecoach, 281-5 (M404-8 OKM), and step-entrance Optare Sigma-bodied Lances 101/9/10 (N401/9/10 MPN)

continued overleaf...

**GROUP
CODES**

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

VE

Veolia

WG

Wellglade
Group

were sold to Stephenson, Rochford (dealer) in August. The Southdown Enthusiasts Club says the Berkhofs' career was terminated by passengers' complaints of feeling unwell in their unventilated bodies during the summer heatwave. They are the first buses in the current livery to be withdrawn.

Bullock, Cheadle, Gtr Manchester

Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton C53F W199 TUJ came from Elcock, Madeley.

Buzzlines, Lympne

White Setra BX06 UMW has been on loan from EvoBus, Coventry (dealer).

Cannon BBT Travel, Bootle

Formerly preserved Leyland Atlantean AN68 /Alexander A123 HLV entered service in blue fleet livery in early July.

Cedric, Wivenhoe, Essex

Volvo B10M-61/Plaxton 12 (602 JHU, B441 YHW) and Bova Futura FHD12-290 14 (MIL 2886, G97 VFP) were sold at BCA Auctions, Manchester. Leyland Olympian/ECW coach 23 (B162 AKH, B110 LPH) has gone for scrap.

Centrebus

The new VDL SB120/Plaxton Centros at Luton are numbered 601-4 (FH06 KGK, KE06 NZW/X, RXL).

Chambers, Bures, Suffolk

Leyland Olympian/Alexander F243 RRT, H951 PTW (90 D 1035) and H542 JBJ (90 D 1050) have passed to Mulleys, Ixworth.

Classic Coaches, Annfield Plain TGM

Two new 12.9m Volvo B12B/Berkhof Axial C55Ft include FJ06 ZKL. New Tellings-Golden Miller corporate livery styles are being introduced, but these are in Classic's usual distinctive red livery. Volvo Olympian/East Lancs Pioneers 7901/2 (S10, 20 BCL) have been transferred from Burton, Haverhill and Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300s 7801/2 (W901/2 UJM) from Network Colchester.

Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart YT51 EAK is still in allover white and has been supplemented by Optare Solo YJ51 JWW.

Other fleetnumbers confirmed are Optare Solos 6500 (YL02 FKY), 6731-5/41 (Y291 PDN, YJ51 JWW, Y293/6/4 PDN) and Mercedes-Benz 609D/Reeve Burgess 6866 (F166 XCS).

The Hylton Castle name will eventually be phased out, leaving only the operator licence extant.

Coach Services, Thetford

Bova Futura F900 RDX has been sold.

Coastal Liner, Wolverhampton

One-time West Yorkshire Road Car Leyland National 2 NL116AL11/1R/B52F UWY 73X was acquired earlier this year in white and green livery, but has been repainted in National Bus Company-style poppy red.

Compass Royston, Stockton

Transferred in from Procter's are Volvo B10M/Plaxton P432 JUJ and Ford Transit NV53 YVE.

The last double-deckers, Bristol VRT/SL3s MOU 746R, PAG 512/3/7V are to be withdrawn, owing to the upgrading of contracts to require seatbelts, as well as an offer from



Above: Classic Coaches T40 TGM, a Plaxton Premiere-bodied Volvo B10M, in the new Tellings-Golden Miller corporate version of this company's livery with white rather than red as the base colour. **STEVEN HODGSON**

Carl Ireland (dealer), Hull for the three V-registered examples, along with previously-withdrawn Leyland Fleetline HSD 85V and Leyland Atlantean AUP 350W. MOU 746R awaits sale.

Mercedes L608D/Reeve Burgess C401 VVN and Leyland Leopard/Duple 322 XTJ have gone for scrap.

Courtney, Bracknell

Despite the recent delivery of new buses, including the first Dennis Enviro300/East Lancs, the operator licence was revoked with effect from 30 September. DAF SB220/East Lancs X906 RHG, Scania/East Lancs R672 NFR and Renault Masters R003 JVA/D/L have left the fleet.

Cresta, Bridgend

Mercedes-Benz Vario O815D/Sitcar Beluga C33F WA06 LZE is new, while an acquisition is Dennis Javelin 12SDA213/Marcopolo C51Ft M643 YSF from McVay, Edinburgh.

D&G, Adderley Green, Staffs

Dennis Dart/Wright 17 (K856 PCN) has been in use as a driver trainer.

Day's Coaches, Ditton

Scania N113DRB/East Lancs Cityzen H45/31F P101 HNC — latterly with Hayton, Burnage — has been acquired.

Delaine, Bourne, Lincs

Further to last month's news report, Anthony Delaine-Smith advises that the 10.3m East Lancs Olympus H49/32F-bodied Volvo B9TL launched at the Eurobus Expo show at the National Exhibition centre on 7-9 November will be numbered 141 (AD56 DBL). It was originally to have had an East Lancs Vyking body and be registered AD06 OCT.

Don's, Dunmow, Essex

Leyland Olympian/East Lancs A487 HKB fell into a hole after a road collapsed following a flash flood in Dunmow in July. Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount A62 KJX has gone to AC Travel, Gravesend, re-registered LUI 6440.

Draper, Tibshelf, Derbyshire

MCW Metrobus B284 WUL has been named *Cliff*, and B163 WUL is *Richard*. DAF SB3000/Van Hool M571 RCP

is *Lucy*. Acquired are MAN 18.310/Noge S601 VAY *Sophie* from Zieba & Fifield, Barry; Iveco EuroRider/Beulas Stergo-E 20 VWC *Phoebe*, ex-Beal, Calverton; and Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panther DN03 YZS (*CJE 32*) *Lulu* from Elcock, Madeley.

Leyland Fleetlines WJ1 6160 (*TVP 871S*), WDS 112V (*HSD 83V*), Bristol VRT/SL3s BKE 849T, URP 943W, Ford/Plaxton DWK 413T, E588 EHD, Bedford/Duple A375 BDL, Bova Futuras A665 EMY, A9 TMD (*B59 DMB*), Bedford/Caetano C954 JFJ, Volvo/Duple MIL 3729 and DAF/Plaxton SIL 8995 have been sold.

Dunn-Line VE

Further to last month's report, 20 new Optare Solos and four Optare Tempos are being bought. Fourteen M780SL/B24F Solo SlimLines are going to Durham, for Nexus contracts; noted so far are YB06 VOK, YJ06 YPP/R, YRM/N. The M990s for the new Sheffield base are to B37F layout. Also new is Volvo B12B/Sunsundegui Sideral coach FJ06 GHB.

Transferred in from Bebb, Llantwit Fardre are Optare Solo M850/B31F 5209-11 (CE52 UWT/X/Y).

Ex-Metroline Volvo Olympian/Alexander RH H43/25D P490/5 MBY, ex-Transdev Yellow Buses Volvo Citybus/East Lancs DP43/33F C201 YPR, D203 ELJ and similar but H45/34F H660/2 GPF, ex-Arriva North West, have been acquired from Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

The three Scania L94UB/Wright Access Fioline, W396-8 PRC, have been sold to South Lancs, Atherton.

Major expansion has resulted in several services in Mansfield taken over from Stagecoach East Midlands, others in Newark and Retford taken over from operators including Stagecoach (East Midlands and Lincolnshire) and Travelwright, and in East Riding the Hull-based Alpha operation has won school contracts from East Yorkshire.

Eastbourne Buses

Surprise news is the sale of the ex-Cardiff Optare Excels, 38-47 (R206-15 DKG), to South Gloucestershire Bus & Coach Company, and their replacement with 10 new 11.3m MAN 14.220/MCV Evolution B40F, of which 62-7 (AE06 XRP/R-V) entered service on 5 August in plain white on Cavendish Connection route 1 (Shinewater-Town Centre-Old Town-Victoria Drive).

Dennis Dart/Wadham Stringer Portsdown 122 (J122 FUF) has been sold for scrap.

East Yorkshire EY

Volvo B7TL/Plaxton President 670 (YY52 LCK) has been repainted in traditional East Yorkshire indigo and primrose to mark the company's 80th anniversary and has been re-registered 80 EYC.

The nine Volvo Citybus B10M-50/Alexander RV-types in the Finglands fleet are being transferred here, four for service in their existing state and five as open-toppers for Scarborough seafront next year, when they will replace remaining Bristol VRs 838-40 (VDV 138-40S) and Leyland Atlanteans 889/90 (VFT 189T, AVK 177V). Those remaining closed top are H45/37F-seated 539-41 (G613/6/7 OTV) and H47/35F-seated (coach seats downstairs) 542 (F242 MBA), while the first of the open-top conversions will be carried out on H45/37F-seated 896 (G618 OTV), with F608-11 GVO following suit.

Left: Coastal Liner UWY 73X, its poppy red former West Yorkshire Road Car Leyland National 2, leaving Stoke railway station for Alton Towers. **CLIFF BEETON**





Above: Eastbourne Optare Excel 46 (R214 DKG) operating service 1 in July, shortly before all 10 of these much travelled buses departed for South Gloucestershire. Their MCV Evolution-bodied MAN 14.220 replacements, including 63 (AE06 XRR), entered service in August in plain white, but subsequently gained vinyls with logos and 'Another new bus...' slogans. **DAVID JUKES/MARK LYONS**

In their place, Volvo Olympian/Alexander Royales 596/7, 601/2 (N596 BRH etc) are being transferred to Finglands.

The former Sovereign Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paragon borrowed from Transdev Burnley & Pendle, 111 (KE51 WUP), returned to Burnley on 28 July. On loan since then was Volvo B12M/Jonckeeer Mistral 112 (SG02 VCM).

Sold in August were Volvo B10M-61/Plaxton Paramount 3500 coach 36 (B192 CGA) and ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian 545 (JTY 404X).

Eifion, Llangeferni, Anglesey

This coach operator has its first service bus, CX06 AGO, a low-floor Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 25/B25F, for a newly-won contract for the Isle of Anglesey County Council.

Embling, Guyhirn, Cambs

Bedford YNTs ESF 699W, A755 HPL (A122 MAC) have been acquired for spares. Leyland Fleetline EAD 122T Marian has been sold to Platinum Coaches, Preston.

Excel, Stansted

Three new MCV Evolution-bodied single-deckers are on order to replace Mercedes-Benz 709Ds.

Expressway, Wath-upon-Dearne

Volvo B12B/Plaxton Paragon FJ06 BRZ is new.

Fair Rider, Huddersfield

Former demonstration BMC Falcon 1100s BX54 VTY and BX05 EKO are confirmed as B40F. Ex-Arriva Mercedes-Benz 709D/Leicester Carriage Builders L328 AUT is a drivers' canteen at Huddersfield bus station.

Finglands, Rusholme EY

Besides the five new Alexander Dennis Enviro300/B44F single-deckers, Volvo Olympian/Alexander Royale N596/7, 601/2 BRH are being transferred from East Yorkshire to complete replacement of the nine Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybuses. They are being upseated from DPH45/29F to DPH49/33F.

Citybuses 1710/3/6-8 (F242 MBA, G613/6-8 OTV) were transferred to East Yorkshire in August, with 1706-9 (F610/108/9 GVO) due to follow.

First Cymru FG

First Manchester Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B43F 69175/6/99, 69205/7-9 (MX06 VPO/PW/E/G/J/K) were used on park-&-ride at the Eisteddfod on 5-12 August before delivery. Also on loan has been Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premier C49Ft S905 LHG, new to Harrison, Morecambe, covering while all 21 Volvo B7R/Plaxton Profiles were re-seated.

Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton 20431 (T868 RGA) has been repainted overall white in preparation for withdrawal. Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 51551 (M851 ATC), 51244 (M449 VWW) have been sold to James Coach Painters, Port Talbot (dealer).

First Devon & Cornwall FG

More ex-New World First Bus, Hong Kong Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B41F due from First Eastern Counties are 42757/79/80 (S657/79/80 SNG).

The PSV Circle reports the sale to Way (dealer), United Downs, for scrap, of Bristol VRTs 38761 (AFJ 761T) and 38848 (EWS 747W), Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 47108 (P408 MLA) and Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright NimBus 50745 (J145 SJT), while Devon County Council-owned

Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 46448 (L548 CDV) has moved to the Turner, Chumleigh fleet.

First Eastern Counties FG

Scania N113CRB/Plaxton Verde B47F 61345 (H912 HRO), new as a Scania demonstrator, and Volvo B10B-58/Alexander Strider B51F 61348/9/57/8/67/8 (L201/2/10/1 KSX, L308/9 VSU) are here from First Glasgow; 61367/8 at least are in service at Norwich.

Ex-First Bristol Leyland Lynx 62625 (F625 RTC) is here, apparently to replace ex-First Wyvern Lynx trainer 62703 (G103 HNP). Ex-First Manchester Dennis Dart/Northern Counties 40185 is M610 SBA, not as reported in August Fleet News.

The last three ex-New World First Bus Dennis Darts, 42757/79/80 (S657/79/80 SNG), are due to transfer to First Devon & Cornwall.

All-Leyland Olympian 34903 (H103 KVV) has been refurbished and returned to service at Norwich. The announced withdrawal of remaining ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians saw non-runners 34536/7 (XHK 236/7X) disposed of, although King's Lynn-based ex-Eastern National 34535 (XHK 235X, the company's first Olympian) and ex-Trent 34711 (A711 DAU) remained in use into June at least. Ex-First Essex 34698 (B698 BPU) has provided an engine for First Essex 34818.

First Essex FG

The new all-black Scania OmniCity/B41F for Chelmsford (not Cheltenham as the editor mistyped in the picture caption last month) park-&-ride entered service on 24 July. They are 65028-32 (YN06 TDO/U/V/X/Z), and 65028-31 are named *Holland*, *Mildmay*, *Tindal* and *Strutt* respectively. Scania L94UB/Wright Solar 65680-4 (YR52 VEH/K/L/P/U/Y) used in the interim have reverted to standard bus livery and similar buses borrowed from First Potteries are returning there, starting with 65727-30/3 (YN05 HCO/P/U/V/Z).

The new Plaxton Primos are expected on 19/20 September. They will have air conditioned cabs, 'next stop' information and closed circuit television.

BMC 1100FE/B60F schoolbus 68521 (KP54 AZV) is here from First West Yorkshire.

A lineside fire close to Kings Cross station led to Eastern National-liveried Dart/Alexander Dash 47252 (M450 VWW) carrying rail passengers to St Neots. The Essex Bus Enthusiast Group suggests this was the first appearance of an Eastern National-liveried bus in the former Eastern National Midland area since United Counties took over in 1952.

Leyland Olympian/ECW 34818 (C418 HJN) is back in service with a replacement engine from former Essex 34698 (B698 BPU), latterly with First Eastern Counties, but 34807 (C407 HJN) is out of use with engine problems.

Dennis Darts 46119/25/6 (K919 CVW, M925/6 TEV) and Leyland Lynx 62524 (F424 MJN) went to Erith Commercials (dealer), Dartford for scrap.

First Hampshire & Dorset FG

Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown 66161 (S361 XCR) has been repainted in City of Portsmouth Passenger Transport livery to mark the 75th anniversary of route 17/18 (The Hard-Eastney), which began as a tram route.

Fire-damaged Volvo Olympian 31836 (R336 LGH) is reported withdrawn, but Dennis Dart 42152 (S642 SCR) is back at Hoeford after fire damage repairs.

continued overleaf...

Below: First Coaches has upgraded the frequency and quality of vehicles used on its service between Bristol city centre and Bristol Airport. Among several First rail replacement Scania K114IBs with Irizar Century bodies transferred for the service and painted in a new livery is 23021 (YN54 APF). **BARRIE GILBERT**



Mercedes-Benz 709D 51646 (N46 OAE) has been withdrawn. Iveco 59.12 52016 (K918 VDV), stored at Portswood, was the last ex-Blue Admiral vehicle in use. Leyland Atlanteans 38271/4/5 (FTR 271X, KOW 274/5Y) have all passed to a Worthing-based preservationist.

First Manchester FG

More new Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B43F are 69176/9-84/6 (MX06 VPP, YXL-N/P/R, MX56 ACY), 69212/4-7 (MX06 VXP, YXT, MX56 AED-F), 69175/6/99, 69205/7-9 (MX06 VPO/P/W/E/G/J/K) were lent to First Cymru (q.v.) in August before delivery. Correcting earlier reports, registrations for 69139-51/3/5/6/8-64/98 are MX06 VOP/T-V/Y, VPA, VNW/Y/Z, VOA-D/G, VNL/M/O/P/R-V, allocated to service 501 (Moss Bank Way-Farnworth). Dennis Dart 40185 is M610 SBA.

Volvo B10B-58/Alexander Strider B51F 61350/1/3/4/6/9-66/9 (L203/4/6/7/9/12 KSX, L301-7/10 VSU) were transferred from First Glasgow in August.

Volvo Citybus/Alexander 30377 (G698 PNS) has been withdrawn, while similar 30353/5 (G412/1 OGD) were disposed of in December 2005.

First Potteries FG

Closure of Newcastle depot has been deferred to next year, but a local network revision was due to go ahead in September.

First South Yorkshire FG

The new Volvo B7L/Wright Geminis did not go to Doncaster, but entered service at Olive Grove amid a splash of publicity, on service 60 (City-Fulwood), most with route branding. This route now sees intense competition from Stagecoach service 120 (Halfway-City-Fulwood), the other half of which parallels First's 41, operated by the previous Geminis from Halfway.

Despite the celebratory end of Dennis Dominator operations in Sheffield the previous Sunday and the announced end of red and yellow-liveried vehicles in June, Doncaster had red and yellow Dominators 30486, 30500 (C875 JWE, D472 OWE) in service on 1 July. Former Doncaster Roe-bodied Leyland Titan PD2 388 KDT operated on service 19 (Doncaster-Balby) recently, raising £200 for charity.

First West Yorkshire FG

The remaining Metro-owned BMC Condor 220/B57F yellow schoolbuses are 68634-7/43 (YK06 EHM, DY/J/H, EHL/E, CZZ), based at Bradford (68643 with 68639) and Halifax (68634/7). There are 47 here, the 10 for CT Plus and three for K-Line making up the 60 for this school year. BMC 1100FE/B60F 68521 (KP54 AZV) has gone to First Essex.

Volvo Olympian/Alexander Royale double-deckers 30828-33 (R648-53 HYG) were transferred to First Edinburgh in June.

Flagfinders, Braintree

Bristol VRT/SL3 CJH 121V has gone Embling, Guyhim as a source of spares.

Galleon Travel, Stansted

Ex-Go North East Volvo B6/Alexander Dash B40F M424/6 PVN are here.

Below: A recent addition to the Halifax Joint Committee fleet, which perpetuates a pre-1974 municipal identity, is 34 (F234 YTJ), an Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian new to Merseyside and previously with Aintree Coachline. **PHIL HALEWOOD**



Garnett, Tindale Crescent, Co Durham

Former Ministry of Defence Dennis Javelin/Wadham Stringer L717 ASD is here.

Gemini, Ipswich

An acquisition is former Carter, Ipswich Optare MetroRider M979 VVY.

Glew, Colchester

Former Hedingham & District Leyland Tiger/Plaxton F781 GNA has been acquired.

Glover, Ashbourne

Secondhand acquisitions are Leyland Tiger/Plaxton C53F AIG 1452 (A44 BHL), Volvo B10M-61/Plaxton C53F A143 SCW, B10M-62/Plaxton C49Ft AIG 1450 (99 D 74498, V323 JTO), Dennis Lancel/Alexander P-type B53F KAZ 4505 (A505 FSS) and Leyland Lynx E35 EVW.

Leyland Leopard/Duple NNU 71W has been sold to a Lincolnshire-based preservationist, Mercedes-Benz/Reeve Burgess A281 FAL to a private owner, Dennis Dart/Carlyle G106 MOB to Thandi Group, Birmingham, Bedford/Duple URA 481X and Mercedes-Benz G700 OCH to unidentified buyers and Lynx G43 VME for scrap.

Go North East GA

As reported in News last month, at least 42 new single-deckers are to be ordered, hence the recent stream of demonstrators; Mercedes-Benz Citaro 9176 (BX05 UVZ) has been on loan again, on the Red Arrows X2 (Sunderland-Washington-Newcastle), for which five of the Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere coaches used as driver trainers, 7058/9/62/74/5 (M58/9 LBB, GSK 962, YSU 874/5), have been refurbished.

The articulated Scania have been repainted silver blue with Centre Link branding. Washington-based Mini Pointer Dart 568 (NK53 TLY) has been repainted using a deeper shade of red than before.

All of Plaxton and Marshall-bodied Darts 8090-8124 (M890-2 GBB, M803-19 GFT, M810-5 HCU, L315 XBB, N117-24 WBR) are reported to have transferred to Birmingham Coach Company by 31 August; 8100/1/4/6/7/13/5 went some time ago, while 8093/9, 8108/10-2/20/1 were also withdrawn by early-August.

Also withdrawn by then were Leyland Olympians 3676/7 (G676/7 TCN), recently acquired ex-Dublin Olympians 3947/8 (H481/5 PVW) and ex-Arriva London 3953/4/6/9-61 (G522/7/9/44/6/5 VBB).

DAF SB220/Optare Delta 4734/9 (G734/9 RTY) have rejoined others of this type with McKindless, Wishaw, rejoining former stablemates there, while Ensignbus, Purfleet has placed 4738/40 (G738/40 RTY) in service. Former OK Travel Delta 4801 (J201 VHN) is with Ogden, St Helens, 4802 (J202 VHN) with Stansted Transit.

Volvo B6/Alexander Dash midibuses continue to find new homes, 8419 (M419 PVN) with Bull Ring, West Bromwich and former Redby 8435 (N671 VUP) with Tate, Stocksbridge. Optare MetroRider 425 (P425 VRG) has passed to Countryliner, Guildford and 428 (P428 VRG) to Trustline, Hunsdon. Also sold are Volvo B6 8417 (L417 KEF), DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 4750/1 (G755/1 UCU), staff shuttle MetroRiders 401/11 (L471 YVK, N411 NTN), driver trainer Leyland National 2s 4711/8 (FTN 711W,

TJR 718Y) and the last Leyland Tigers in the fleet, 5102-4/18/28 (C102-4 PCN, A718 ABB, C682 JGR).

Godson, Crossgates, Leeds

Acquired are Mercedes-Benz O404/Hispano Vita C49Ft Y368 UOM and Irisbus EuroRider 397E-12-31/Plaxton C53F YN05 VRY. Sold are Volvo B10M/Plaxton coach K725 GWR, N128 DDT, W623 FUM, B10M/Caetano N796 ORY and Bova Futuras M230 VHE, N972 EUG.

Leyland National EX1 2445 (BCD 801L) — Southdown's first National — has been scrapped.

Golden Boy, Hoddesdon, Herts

New is Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart EU06 WGM.

Graham's Training, Wimbledon

The current fleet comprises MCW Metrobus/H43/28D 12, 22, 31, 89, 293, 708, 905/8/75, 1264 (WYWW 13, 22, 31, 89T; BYX 293V; OGG 708Y, 545 CLT, CJD 845Y; A905/8 SUL, A975 SYF), and Optare Excel L1000/B30D 51 (YJ51 JXH).

Preserved vehicles owned are former Blackpool Leyland Titan PD3A1/MCW H41/30F 516 (HFR 516E) and AEC Swift 3MP2R/Marshall B47D 570 (OFR 970M), former Ribble PD3/5/MCW FH41/31F 1841 (AAO 771A, TCK 841) and former London AEC Routemaster/Park Royal H40/32R RML2290, 2321, 2734 (CUV 290, 321C, SMK 734F).

Green Bus Service, Great Wyrley, Staffs

The days of the Leyland Leopard are numbered, and they are unlikely to last beyond next May. Added to the fleet are Volvo B6/Alexander Dash DP40F L268 CCK, M720 BCS, ex-Stagecoach Bluebird and Stagecoach Merseyside respectively, which have not yet received fleethumbers.

Griffiths, Felinheli

ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 YMB 509W has been sold to Grierson, Fishburn.

Hafan, Blaenau Ffestiniog

Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount 3500 C49F JEY 554Y is here from Silver Star, Caernarfon.

Halifax Joint Committee

Leyland Olympian/Alexander H45/30F 34 (F234 YTJ) has been acquired from Aintree Coachline, Bootle. MCW Metrobuses withdrawn are BYX 153, 277V, GYE 408W, KYV 793X and OJD 816Y.

Ham, Flimwell, East Sussex

Irish-owned Volvo/Jonckheere Mistral coaches acquired are B12M/C51Ft WJ51 FKU (02 WW 1260), new to Moroney, Bray, and B12B/C49Ft WF52 EUE (02 G 8794), latterly with Callinan, Claregalway.

Hedingham Omnibuses, Essex

Former Metroline Volvo Olympian/Alexander RH P494 MBY has been acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer).

Notable disposals to Ensign are Bristol VRT/SL3s L261/2 (CJH 115/41V), the last remaining vehicles from old-established Osborne, Tollesbury. Further VRs sold to Ensign are L202/35/6/52/89 (BRC 836T, WJM 831T, CJH 143V, MRJ 9W, DCA 529X).

Hilton, Newton-le-Willows

Former Blue Bus/Arriva North West Optare MetroRiders R227/9 SCH have been acquired, along with Mercedes-Benz N719 DJC.

Holloway, Scunthorpe

Further to Buses July, two former Dublin Bus Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Leyland Olympians were acquired from Nu Venture of Aylesford in April; the other is H792 PTW.

Holmeswood, Rufford, Lancs

Irisbus EuroRider/Marcopolo C70F PN06 TVP is a further new example here. MAN 11.220/Marcopolo C35F midicoach PO54 VZT has been acquired.

Heritage bus registration marks in use here are Volvo B10M/Berkhof 5 AAX (Red & White Bristol Lodekka); Dennis Javelin/Caetano 848 AFM, Scania K93/Van Hool 296 HFM, Volvo B10M/Van Hool 629 LFM (Crosville Lodekka); MAN/Marcopolo 184 XNO (Eastern National Lodekka coach); Scania K113/Plaxton 716 GRM (Cumberland Lodekka); Volvo B10M/Plaxton 152 ENM (Luton Dennis Loline); DAF SB3000/Ikarus JHF 824, MAN/Marcopolo JHF 825, Dennis Javelin/Marcopolo JHF 826 (Wallasey Leyland Atlanteans) and Volvo B10M/Van Hool 186 CLT (London Routemaster).



Left: Huntingdon & District 5329 (AU55 DYO), the recently acquired Alexander Dennis Enviro300, leaving Drummer Street bus station, Cambridge. **JAMES EXCELL**

Vecta M804 PRA. Also acquired is Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragon C49Ft YN53 VBG from Loonat, Batley.

Kent Coach Travel, Sheerness

Acquired are Volvo B10M-61/Van Hool Alizée C48Ft EWW 665 (D506 GHY), B10M-60/Plaxton Paramount III C50Ft FDZ 980 (G521 LWU) both from First Devon & Cornwall and B10M-61/Alizée C57F LSU 788 (D601 GHY) from First Bristol. Sullivan, Potters Bar has provided Dennis Dart 9.8SDL3011/Plaxton Pointer B34F J602/8/14 XHL.

Kent County Council, Aylesford

New are Irisbus Daily 50C14HPI minibus GN06 PUA in white/red with grey skirt with Kent Karrier fleetnames, and Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panther C57F YN06 OPU.

Kinchbus WG

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B40F 899 (P411 BNR) has returned from Trent Barton. Mercedes-Benz Vario O810D/Plaxton Beaver 285/9 (S285/9 UAL) have been sold.

Kings Ferry, Gillingham

Scania K114EB4/Berkhof Axial 50 C53Ft 6.3-5 (YN06 NYF-H) are new. Acquired are Scania K124IB6/Berkhof Excellence 3000HD CH45/17Ct 7.8 (T11 SCC) from Siesta, Middlesbrough and Daimler Fleetline CRL6-30/MCW O44/33F 9.1 (KUC 958P) from Big Bus Company, London.

Setras 5.21 and 5.22 (BV55 FPL/N) have been renumbered 6.1 and 6.2, the '6' series of fleetnumbers being used for vehicles of the Platinum Service brand. 5.1 (T401 OWA) has been re-registered L8 KFC, 4.4 (Y10 TTL) following as H5 KFC.

Hopley, Mount Hawke, Cornwall

Bristol VRT KVF 248V is due for imminent withdrawal.

Hornsby, Ashby, Lincs

BMC Falcon 1100/B40F BX04 DVV, Dennis Javelin/Plaxton 8955 RH (R220 GFU), T208 KJV and Dennis Darts N617 UEW, R189 NFE and Y39 WVW have been advertised for sale.

Horseman, Reading

Further to the September issue the order for 20 Volvo B12Bs includes the five already delivered, RX06 WVA-E. The remaining 15 are expected by 1 November. Toyota Coaster/Optimos N669/70/2/3 VJB have been re-instated.

Hulme Hall, Cheadle Hulme

This operator is planning a Bristol VR running day on service 379 (Poynton-Manchester Airport), for 7 October. Visiting VRs are expected to supplement the operator's own examples. Details from Derek Scott at Hulme Hall on 0161 486 1187.

Leyland Titan NUW 624Y has been acquired from Stagecoach Merseyside.

Huntingdon & District

A notable addition, ex-Anglian, Beccles, is 12m Alexander Dennis Enviro300 5329 (AU55 DYO). Leyland Olympian/ECW C55 CHM is in service.

Isle Coaches, Owston Ferry, Lincs

Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount D500 RWF has been sold.

Jackson, Bicknacre, Essex

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Euro Coach Builders C33F 3 (AE06 JNF) is new. An acquisition is DAF/Van Hool MJ1 5031 (K96 GEV) now refurbished and C49Ft. Mercedes-Benz/Autobus 609D L738 NWU has been sold to Taylor, Isleham (dealer).

JSB, Coundon, Co. Durham

New are Optare Solo M850s MX06 BSV/Y.

Kent Coach Tours, Ashford

Optare Excel L1150/B45F S168 UAL, here from Trent Barton, has been refurbished and was expected to enter service in September, replacing MAN/Optare

HALFCABSETCETERA JOHN G. LIDSTONE's quarterly update on older British buses at home and abroad

AEC Regent III

The sad, burnt-out remains of former Trent 1201 (BRC 401), a Willowbrook-bodied 9612X of 1950 (9.6litre engine, Crossley-designed synchromesh gearbox, one of just 10 built) was exposed recently from beneath 20 years of overgrown woodland yards from the main Long Road on Canvey Island. It was owned by a reclusive Canvey resident since withdrawal by Trent in 1964 and remained intact until attacked by vandals a few years ago. It was bought to convert into a caravan and toured the Swiss Alps, being featured in *Autocar* magazine at the time.

AEC Routemaster

The Colchester Arts Centre has former Metroliner RML2296 (CUV 296C).

Daimler Fleetline

Former London Transport CRG6LXB/Park Royal DMS227 (JGF 227K) has become the Tadley Youth Bus, based at the Tadley United Reformed Church, Hampshire. It was previously with Tadley Lighthouse Project.

Leyland Atlantean

Former South Yorkshire PTE Alexander-bodied AN68/1R open-topper 287 (SWB 287L) is confirmed as

Right: In conjunction with Lydney-based London Bus Export, the Gower Heritage Centre introduced a summer open-top bus link with Swansea city centre this year. Regular bus on it is CTF 626B, an East Lancs-bodied Leyland Titan with cut-back rear overhang. Its identity is baffling, as the original CTF 626B was a Massey-bodied Titan PD2A/27 (concealed radiator) in the Lytham St Annes fleet. **BARRIE GILBERT**

Below right: A former London RT being used by a private brewery in Erlangen, Germany last summer. **MATT GILES**

operating with Sussex Trade & Waste as a promotional unit.

Ex-Trent ECW-bodied AN68C/1R 577 (LRB 577W) is in use as a smoking room outside the Priory Hotel in Nanpanton, near Loughborough, still in Road Car livery.

Former Lothian Alexander-bodied AN68C/1R 634 (GSC 634X) and former Ribble ECW-bodied AN68B/1R 1493 (FBV 493W) are film crew support vehicles with Hy Line, based at the Lezayre film studios near Ramsey, Isle of Man.

MCW Metrobus

Toy manufacturer Zapf Creations has donated former London General M516 (GYE 516W) to Wicksteed Park, Kettering, one of the oldest and largest free children's playgrounds in the UK. Dubbed the 'Big Pink Bus', it had been converted into an exhibition unit/playbus. Former Arriva London M736

Left: An ex-East Kent open-top Park Royal-bodied Guy Arab III in the Marienplatz, Munich during the period of the World Cup football finals last summer. **ROBERT MISSEN**



(GMN 273V, KYV 736X) has become a film crew support vehicle with Hy Line, based at the Lezayre film studios near Ramsey, Isle of Man.



KMP, Llanberis

Ex-Truronian TransBus Enviro300/B37F KW02 DRO was on loan from Dawsonrentals, covering while Volvo B7RLE K7 KMP was away for accident repairs.

Konectbus, Dereham, Norfolk

Another Optare Tempo X1200/B42F is 406 (MX06 YXU), in fleet livery, although it is the spare bus for Costessey park-&ride. It also operates on routes 3 (Norwich-Watton) and 4 (Norwich-Dereham-Swanton Morley).

LA Coaches, Sale, Cheshire

Unusual acquisitions are N32 EVT, N133 GRF, Mercedes-Benz OH416/Wright Urbanranger B47F, ex-South Lancs Travel, Atherton.

Ladyline, Key Green, Cheshire

Dennis Dart/Plaxton J602 XHL has replaced burnt-out J396 GKH.

Landylines, Greenham, Somerset

Optare Solo M990/B37F YJ06 YSR is new.

Leven Valley, Great Ayton, Middlesbrough

New Optare Solo M880/B28F T888 EXG follows similar 27/8 (T27/8 EXG) new last year. It replaces cannibalised Mercedes-Benz 811D/Dormobile 23 (L923 UGA), which went to Snaith, Otterburn. To cover increased work, Mistral rental Solo MX06 OSW is on loan.

LL Travel, Mexborough, S Yorks

Mercedes-Benz Vario 0815D/Sitar Beluga 2 C29F SJ55 EJW is confirmed in use.

Lloyd, Machynlleth

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Excalibur C53F P733 AAA has been acquired from Kent Coach Tours. Former Arriva Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander P387 FEA has been re-registered P222 WYN, a registration mark carried formerly on owner Wyn Lloyd's car.

London Central/London General GA

The commercial services fleet is well dispersed and is currently allocated to Sutton (Darts LDP14, 37, 40, 51, Olympians NV167/8/75/6/9/83-7), Putney (Routemaster RML887), Merton (RML2604, NV164/71/4/7/8), New Cross (RM9, RML2472, NV165/73/82), Plough Lane (RML2520), Peckham (NV181), Camberwell (Routemaster DRM2516, NV166) and Stockwell (LDP2, RML2305/18, NV162/70).

RML2318 (CUV 318C), now open-top and in red and white livery, was busy at Wimbledon and at Hampton Court Flower Show.

London Heritage Travel, Southend

This new operator has AEC Routemaster/Park Royal H40/32R RML2714 (SMK 714F).

Malcolm, Clacton

Former Colchester Borough Leyland Atlantean/ECW TPU 68R has been acquired.

Marchwood, Totton, Hants

A fire at the garage has destroyed DAF SB120/Wright Cadets 553/7/62 (YG52 CEA, CLZ/U).

MASS, North Anston

Leyland National EPT 879S is with Need-a-Bus, Colwick, Nottinghamshire.

McCabe, Swinton, Greater Manchester

Leyland Atlantean/Northern Counties ANC 218T has been sold for use as a playbus on the Fylde coast.

Meredith, Malpas, Cheshire

Scania L94/Irizar Century C53F YN55 NJY was new recently.

Metrobus GA

Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts 381-9/91-3 (Y381 HKE etc) are to be returned off-lease this autumn. Meanwhile, Optare Solo 197 (W427 CWX) went to Network Colchester.

Right: Unusual members of Wellglade's Notts & Derby fleet are two Marshall-bodied Volvo Citybuses acquired from Arriva Derby and still in its colours. 739 (B139 GAU) was photographed in Derby city centre. **TONY HALL**

M&M, Accrington

Former Arriva North West Mercedes-Benz Vario 0810D/Alexander B27F P255 HOJ has been acquired.

Moxon, Oldcotes, Notts

New is Neoplan Euroliner YN06 FVA, for which Bova Futura M9 XON (YD02 PXM) was part exchanged, having reverted to its original registration, while Futura R852 KUG has been re-registered M9 XON.

Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW HIL 6457 (RUA 450W) has been repainted in latest cream and red livery, while Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount HIL 6457 has been re-registered 7715 KV, but similar OJI 9451 (B368 BV4) is out of use.

Mulley, Ixworth, Suffolk

Following the winning of school contracts, Leyland Olympian/Alexander F243 RRT, H951 PTW and H542 JBJ (90 D 1035/50) have been acquired from Chambers, Bures. F243 RRT is H47/32F and was new to Chambers, the other two are ex-Dublin Bus and H47/33F.

Network Colchester TGM

A second Scania OmniDekka N94UD/East Lancs double-decker is 102 (YN06 TFZ).

Transferred in from parent Burton, Haverhill are Alexander Dennis Super Pointer Dart/B37F AY54 FPZ, FRC, reuniting all 10 Darts bought by Burton's in 2004, and Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano X194/6/8 FOR, while Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300 W901/2/5 UJM have gone to Burton's.

The fleet has been renumbered as follows, with thanks, as ever, to Geoff Mills:

Scania OmniDekka/East Lancs 101 (AY55 DKA) ex-340;

Volvo Citybus/East Lancs 213-5/7 (G613-5/7 BPH) ex-333-5/7;

All-Leyland Olympian 246-9 (F248 MTW, H47-9 MJN) ex-346-9;

Optare Solo 300 (W427 CWX) ex-427;

Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano 510-5/7 (Y40, 50 TGM, R60, 70, 80, 90 BCL, HX51 SRN) ex-354/5, 106-9, 351;

Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart 520-7/30 (SN54 HWY/Z, HXA-F, LK55 KZZ) ex-360-7/not previously numbered and 994/6/8 (X194/6/8 FOR) ex-114/6/8;

Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814/Plaxton Beaver 708 (S108 HGX) ex-378;

Mercedes-Benz Vario 0810/Plaxton Beaver 723/4 (R763 DUB, R174 VBM) ex-373/4;

Dennis Dart/East Lancs EL2000 800/1/6 (N540/1 TPF, M526 MPM) ex-310/1/09;

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 802/3 (M722/3 CGO) ex-302/3;

Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300 906/7 (W906/7 UJM) ex-386/7.

NIBS, Wickford, Essex

Mercedes-Benz 811D L891 UVE has become a store shed.

Nip-On, St Helens

EOS E180Z/C49Ft P870 PWW has been acquired from Eavesway, Ashton in Makerfield. Further to August Fleet News, Leyland Tiger/Duple Dominant A150 LFR has not gone for scrap but was acquired for preservation.

**Norfolk Green, Kings Lynn**

Optare Alero YJ06 FYG, understood to be a demonstrator, has been noted in service.

North Birmingham Busways, Erdington

DAF SB220/Optare Delta 6 (H536 YCX), from Claribel, Birmingham. Leyland Atlantean/East Lancs 25 (STK 125T) has been sold to a High Wycombe-based preservationist, but 64 (OBX 164X) has gone to Wigley, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

North Dorset Travel, Bournemouth

Volvo 9700 Prestige Plus C49Ft demonstration coach VL05 VOL has been acquired.

Northumbria, Ashington

Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 30 (B115 SJA) has been refurbished for service here. Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Darts 33/4 (NK04 UTJ/L) have left for a Scottish operator.

North West Travel, Liverpool

Optare Solos acquired are W51 NDW, YJ55 BJO.

Nottingham City Transport

Dennis Tridents displaced from Go2 services are to be repainted into Purple Line Network Nottingham livery, thereby releasing Volvo Olympians for disposal.

Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS-types 767-71 (N767-71 WRC) — used on former South Notts service 1

(Nottingham-East Leake-Loughborough) — are to be withdrawn following service changes in September. Scania N113DRB/Alexander RH-type 371 (G371 RTO) has passed to Elliott, South Mimms.

Notts & Derby WG

Mercedes-Benz Vario 0810/Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F 290 (S290 UAL) has been transferred from Trent Barton.

Nu Venture, Aylesford, Kent

Acquired are ex-Stagecoach West Leyland Titans T592, 905 (NUW 592Y, A905 SYE) and Leyland Lynx LX2R11C15Z4R B49F 164 (G614 CEF).

Oxford Bus Company GA

Ex-London General Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 412 (P739 RYL) has passed to Birmingham Coach Company. Leyland Lynx driver trainer 971 (C63 HOM) has been withdrawn while Volvo B10B/Northern Counties 646 (K120 BUD, K3 KLL) has become driver trainer 963.

Grant Palmer, Dunstable

Alexander Dennis Enviro300 schoolbus demonstrator SN55 HSF was on loan in July.

People's Bus, Walton, Liverpool

Leyland Titan KYV 526X from Blackburn Transport rejoins KYV 517X here.

Pilkington, Accrington

Bird, Burnley (dealer) took Leyland Nationals PIB 4033, 5952, 6434 (OJD 899R, BNO 669T, WFR 392V) and CNB 423N (PIB 6667, MAN 14A) for scrap, along with Leyland National Greenways IIL 4821/2 (XPD 291N, LPB 180P) and SJI 5066 (NEN 961R).



Left and below: Preston Bus 201 (PL06 RYO), the first of the initial production batch of the new East Lancs Esteem body on a Scania N94UB chassis, shows off the operator's new livery. They replace seven Leyland Lynxes, like 17-year-old 218 (G218 KRN), which was still in service in July.
GARY CONN/MIKE HADDON

Poynter, Wye, W Midlands

Former Go North East DAF SB220/Optare Delta B51F J206 VHN is an acquisition.

Preston Bus

Scania N94UB/East Lancs Esteems 201-7 (PL06 RYO/P/R/T-W) were being built in August. The first two were due to be delivered on 9 August, but the other five were to receive new 56-registrations. They introduce a new livery for low-floor buses, using a revised shade of blue with light green swoops and cream finishing. New style fleetnames are applied, notably omitting the traditional Preston coat of arms.

Also due in the new livery are the first of the 17 more Optare Solos, most for new Orbit service 88a (anti-clockwise) and 88c (clockwise), which starts on 22 October, replacing existing services 5, 6 and 27.

The Scantias replace seven Leyland Lynxes — including 214 (G214 KRN) and last of the ex-Halton examples, Lynx 2 No.222 (J222 MKC) — for which buyers have been found. The Solos will replace 17 Optare MetroRiders.

Procter, Hanley, Staffs

Acquired is Bova Futura R252 KQW. Leyland Leopard HIL 7624 is out of use, and DAFs HIL 2375/7 have gone to an operator called Copeland's for spares.

Pulham, Bourton-on-the-Water

Three Cummins-engined Optare Solos, the first low-floor buses for this respected Cotswold fleet, have been delivered for contracts taken over following the demise of Beaumont Travel. Two of them are registered YJ06 YSU and YP56 APZ.

Pullman, Crofty VE

New Optare Solo CU06 LCL and MAN 14.220/MCV Evolution CU05 EJV are among the first vehicles to appear in a new Veolia corporate livery of London bus red with grey skirt.

Rambler, Hastings

New Volvo B12B/Berkhof C53Fi CR06 EDY is 12.9m long. A notable re-acquisition is of Bedford VAM14/Duple Viceroy C45F JUF 244E (EDY 565E), latterly with Simpson, Whittlesey.

Reading Buses

After production delays in Poland, Scania OmniCity single-deckers 1-5, for Goldline's enhanced contract for Thames Valley Park, were expected in service in late-September. Vodafone Scantias 6-12 — in overall red with Vodafone advertising — are on schedule for their new services from early October.

An unregistered Euro4-engined Scania OmniLink single-decker arrived on 21 August for driver training at Reading and Newbury. The operator hopes to evaluate an ethanol-fuelled OmniCity double-deck demonstrator during September.

Accident damaged Optare Excel 942 (V942 DCF) has returned to service in basic cream and maroon with small Newbury Buses logos, in preparation for departure from the fleet in October. The last two early DAF SB220/Optare Deltas have been withdrawn from Newbury, 504/9 (G504/9 XBL); these, plus 502, were sold to Ensign 9dealer, Purfleet. Delta 517 (N517 YTF) has transferred to Newbury but retains Reading Buses livery. 514 has still to follow.

Regal Busways, Highwood, Essex

The new Kick-Start service 1 (Canvey Island-Chelmsford) was won on tender from Essex County Council and provides a useful cross-Essex link where there was no rail or bus link previously. New vehicles are on order for this service, but further vehicles in use in the meantime are Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Darts 601/2 (YN04 PZY/Z) and Dennis Dart/MCV Evolution 701 (AE55 EHM).

Regent, Whitstable

Irisbus Euromidi CC80/Indcar Maxim 2 C29F coach YN55 YPR is new, in white with orange and red trim.



Below: YJ06 YSU is one of three new Optare Solos that introduce low-floor buses to Pulham's of Bourton-on-the-Water. **RICHARD SHARMAN**



Below: One day all Veolia-owned fleets may use the new red corporate livery carried on Pullman, Crofty CU05 EJV, an MCV Evolution-bodied MAN 14.220, while working at the National Eisteddfod in Swansea in August. **BARRIE GILBERT**



GROUP CODES

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DG

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EB

Ensignbus

EY

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FG

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GA

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NX

National
Express
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

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TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

VE

Veolia

WG

Wellglade
Group



Above: Stagecoach North West has withdrawn 25800 (B900 WRN), the solitary Duple Dominant-bodied Leyland Tiger bus supplied to Ribble in 1984, when it was part of the National Bus Company. When photographed at Dungeon Ghyll in September 2002, it carried former fleetnumber 900 and wore Stagecoach striped livery. **KEITH MASON**

Renown, Bexhill

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B35F P691/7 RWU have been acquired ex-Wilson, Gourcock.

Roadliner, Poole

Optare Solo M920/B34F Y812 KDP has been acquired from Courtney, Bracknell.

Roundabout Buses, Bexleyheath

Former Metrobus all-Leyland Olympian G806 TMX has been acquired.

Semmence, Wymondham, Norfolk

New additions are MAN 14.220/MCV Evolution AE06 XSA/B. Acquired from Ambassador, Great Yarmouth are Scania K113/Van Hool Alizée HE C49Ft 203/4 (TIL 9217, N823 DKU; N824 DKU).

Shamrock, Poole

Volvo B12B/Sunsundegui Sideral FJ04 ERY has passed to J&B, Horsforth.

Shoreline Suncruisers, Scarborough

Another MCW Metrobus here is B227 WUL.

Silver Star, Caernarfon

Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus B40F K301/03 NJL, L305 VFE have been acquired from Stagecoach Lincolnshire.

Simonds, Botesdale, Suffolk

Volvo B7R/Plaxton W14 PCL and X779 XEX have been re-registered 224 ENG and 4512 UR respectively.

Solent Blue Line GA

Wilts & Dorset DAF DB250/Optare Spectra double-deckers 3108/10 (K108/10 VLJ) were on loan in August. Volvo Olympians 818-820 (N539 LHG, N411/3 JBV) have been rebranded as Bluestar; the Solent Blue Line name is to be phased out at least as a fleetname.

Southern Vectis GA

Dennis Darts 818/9 (J382 GKH, K244 PAG) are to go to Solent Blue Line in exchange for two Mini Pointer Darts.

South Gloucestershire, Bristol

Acquired during August were Optare Excel L1150/B42F R206-15 DKG from Eastbourne Buses. They have

done the rounds of the municipal sector; new to Cardiff, Eastbourne acquired them from Reading Buses.

South Lancs, Atherton

Scania L94UB/Wrights Access Foline B43F W396-8 PRC have been acquired from Dunn-Line.

Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 27 (J627 KCU) has been withdrawn. Mercedes-Benz Urbanranger/Wright 132/3 (N32 EVT, N133 GRF) have been sold to LA Coaches, Sale and Volvo Citybus 144 (G644 BPH) to Wealden PSV (dealer).

South Yorkshire, Ackworth, Pontefract

Five ex-Stagecoach Merseyside Volvo B6/Alexander Dash B40F fare expected from Staffordshire Bus Centre (dealer). The second reported is 204 (L405 JBD), named *Eileen*.

Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 104 (B147 XNA) and is being cannibalised.

Speedwell, Glossop

Another new Optare Solo is MX06 BOV. Dennis Dart/Carlyle H846 NOC is here from Cross Gates Motors, and DAF SB220/Optare Delta J310 BVO from Konectbus, Dereham.

Below: The environmental credentials of Stagecoach South East's Euro4-engined Alexander Dennis Enviro300s on Winchester park-&-ride are reinforced by a green livery applied in corporate style. This is 27513 (GX06 DZH). **MARK LYONS**





Above: The front entrance/rear exit offside rear-engined Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Easy Flow demonstrator, SN54 GRU, on hire to Stephenson's of Essex in August. Behind is SBC Leisure's open-top ex-Lothian Scania on the new seafront service mentioned in Fleet News last month.

JOHN G. LIDSTONE

Stagecoach Cambridgeshire ST

New Optare Solos at Cambridge are now reported as 47351-5 (AE06 TWN/P/U/V/X), which reverses the registration order of 47353/5 as reported last month. Also new are Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart/B38F 35103-6 (AE06 WXO/P/R/S) and GNER-owned Ford Transits 49803/4 (NC06 DHZ, YED) for the new TaxiBus service in Peterborough (News last month).

A new service from 23 July links Peterborough with Skegness. The first through journey was by Alexander Dennis Trident 18416 (AE06 GZM).

The last operational Optare MetroRiders at Cambridge, 47988/9 (M808/9 WWR), have been sold to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer), along with Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 14514 (F514 NJE), last of 12 vehicles new to Cambus and still here.

Stagecoach Devon ST

Altogether, 10 Dennis Tridents are due from Stagecoach Manchester. Scania N113DRB/Northern Counties H41/27F 15339/49/50/69 (J139 HMT, K849/50/69 LMK) have come from Stagecoach South East.

Scania N113CRB/Alexander PS-type 28913 (F913 JRG) has been sold to Hoare, Chepstow (dealer).

Stagecoach East Midlands ST

Ex-East London Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400 H51/22D 17039-47/62/3 (S839 BWC, T640-7/62/3 KPU) are being converted to single-door (H51/26F) before entering service at Hull, which will release further Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians of the C-LFT batch for sale. 14617/30/48 (C617/30/48 LFT) are withdrawn and Tridents 17040/46/7/63 (T640 KPU etc) are in service. Olympians 14339/41 (G639/41 KKW) are being prepared for training, 14339 as a driver trainer, 14341 for engineering training.

Tendered services in Mansfield and Newark have passed to Dunn-Line. The Grimsby-Cleethorpes fleet transfers to Stagecoach Lincolnshire control from 24 September.

Stagecoach Lincolnshire ST

The Grimsby-Cleethorpes fleet transfers to Stagecoach Lincolnshire from 24 September, when new Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart/B38F 35128-50 (YN56 HAA/E/O/U/X, HBA-D/F-H/J-L/O/P/U, GZV-Z) are due to enter service on a revised town network with enhanced frequencies on routes 3F and 4/A.

An outside contractor has converted former Stagecoach London Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 34182-9/91-4 (W182 DNO etc) to B32F (ex-B31D) for use in Lincoln.

Leyland Olympian ON2R56G1324/Alexander RL DPH51/31F 14960 (G210 SSL) and H51/34F-seated 14979/83 (G709/03 TCD) and Volvo Olympian YN2RC16V3/Alexander RL DPH47/28F 16341 (N341 MPN) have been transferred from Stagecoach South East.

Volvo B7TL/East Lancs 16903 (Y903 OTL) has changed identity to 16900 (Y926 OJL), while East Lancs-rebodied Leyland Tiger 25806 (WWL 515) has reverted to A258 VWO.

Depot codes have been introduced: GH (Gainsborough), GX (Grimsby), LC (Lincoln), LH (Louth), NK (Newark), SK (Skegness) and SP (Scunthorpe).

Dennis Dart 30158 (N327 JTL) and MCW Metrobus 15982 (POG 583Y) have been reinstated at Lincoln, Volvo B10M 52125 (IUI 5482) at Scunthorpe.

MAN 18.220/Alexander B42F 22801-3/8/11/2 (V801 DFV etc) did not stay here long; they have moved on to Stagecoach Manchester.

Withdrawn, partly as a result of contracts in Newark and Gainsborough lost to Dunn-Line, are MCW Metrobuses 15955/64/5/9/71/9/87 (POG 491, 517/8/28/41/79/93Y), Volvo B6R/Alexander Dash 30186/7, 30958/9 (J704 BRM, K271/70/3 ERM), Volvo B6/Marshall 30981 (L81 CNY), Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 32468-75 (K301-3 NJL, L304-8 VFE) and Optare MetroRiders 47941-8 (M351-8 BFE). Darts 32468/70/72 have been sold to Silver Star, Caernarfon.

Stagecoach Manchester ST

All of the Alexander Dennis Enviro400/H47/33F, 19001-22 (MX06 LUO, XAA-E/G/H/J-P/R-W/Y), had arrived at Stockport by mid-August. MAN 18.220/Alexander B42F 22801-3/8/11/2 (V801 DFV etc), new to Cumberland, are here from Stagecoach Lincolnshire.

More Dennis Tridents to move on are 18389/90 (MX55 KSU, ZNH), which are at Stagecoach Bluebird. Ex-Dennis's Darts 33094-7 (T63 AUA, T965 PVR, Y951/2 XRN) have gone to Stagecoach Yorkshire, while Leyland Olympian 13518 (C158 HBA) has gone to Stagecoach Bluebird.

Stagecoach Merseyside ST

Volvo B10B/Alexander Strider 21003/5/7 (M388/91/3 VWX) have gone to Stagecoach North West and Volvo B10M/Alexander PS 20145/71/4/8 (R645 LSO, K571/4/8 LTS) to Stagecoach Glasgow.

Some of the seemingly indestructible 65 Leyland Olympian/Alexander RH H45/31F new to Busways in 1985/86 could move here as 14657 (C657 LFT) has been transferred from Stagecoach Glasgow, apparently for evaluation.

DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 26004-6 (J800, L700, N600 ABC) have been sold, and Leyland Titan 10624 (NUW 624Y) has gone to Hulme Hall, Cheadle Hulme.

Stagecoach North East ST

The new Alexander Dennis Enviro400/H47/33F for Newcastle are 19023-45 (SN56 AVM/O/P/R/T-Z, AWA/C/F-H/J/M/O/P/R/U/V).

MAN 18.220s have been noted en route to Darlington, which is expected to lose some or all of its Volvo B10Ms. Reserve Leyland Olympian/Alexander 14655 (C655 LFT) is back in service, at Sunderland, having been previously at Hartlepool.

Out of service are Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300s 21147/58 (R247/58 KRG) and Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 32112 (K112 SRH).

Stagecoach North West ST

In from Stagecoach Western is Volvo B10M-62/Jonckheere C44Ft 52635 (S665 SDT) while Stagecoach Merseyside Volvo B10B/Alexander Strider DP49F 21003/5/7 (M388/91/3 VWX) have been transferred in and allocated to Morecambe.

Morecambe-based Dennis Javelin/Duple 300 buses 27035-7 (F135-7 SPX) are in reserve. Sold are Volvo B10M-55/Alexander 20430 (M230 TBV), Leyland Leopard driver trainer 25753 (EGB 53T), solitary ex-Ribble Leyland Tiger/Duple Dominant bus 25800 (B900 WRN), Volvo B6s 30305, 30946 (M745 PRS, M676 SSX), Dennis Darts 32185, 32280-3, 32666/72/5/7 (K861 LGN, J609 KCU, K831-3 RTY, K107 XHG, J520/7/31 GCD) and Dodge Commando driver trainer 48029 (D375 DCK), while Leyland Titan 10337 (KYV 337X) has gone for scrap.

Stagecoach South East ST

Green Winchester park-&-ride 12m Alexander Dennis

Enviro300/B44F 27511-5 (GX06 DZF-H/J/K) entered service in August; they are the first with Euro4 Cummins ISBe4 engines. Also new are Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart/B38F 35117-27 (GX06 AZG, GX56 KVVU-W/Z, KWA-E) for Worthing and Optare Solo M850/B27F 47369-79 (GX06 JXS-W/Y/Z, JYA-D) for Dover town services.

Tri-axle Leyland Olympian 13621 (H724 KDY) has been fitted with lower saloon luggage racks, reducing its seating capacity from DPH53/39F to DPH53/29F.

Transfers to other group companies have seen Leyland Olympians 14960/79/83 (G210 SSL, G709/03 TCD) and Volvo Olympian 16341 (N341 MPN) go to Stagecoach Lincolnshire and Scania N113DRBs 15339/49/50/69 (J139 HMT, K849/50/69 LMK) go to Stagecoach Devon.

Volvo Citybus 15209 (F309 MYJ), latterly at Hastings, was withdrawn in July.

Stagecoach West ST

Two vehicles transferred out of Cheltenham District are Unimotion-liveried Dennis Trident/Alexander 17722 (MK02 EGD) — repainted into fleet livery and with Swindon & District to provide extra capacity on service 49 (Swindon-Trowbridge) — and Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 32234 (NDZ 3134) permanently with Cheltenham & Gloucester following several months on loan.

Placed in reserve are Cheltenham & Gloucester Mercedes-Benz 811D/Marshall 41806 (L806 XDG) and Swindon & District Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash 32319 (N319 AMC). Withdrawn are Cheltenham & Gloucester's remaining three recently ex-Yorkshire Optare MetroRiders, 47962/4/7 (N210/2/5 VRC), and 1988 Leyland Olympian/Optare 14500/1 (E500/1 LFL). Swindon & District has withdrawn 1982 Leyland Olympian/Roe 14287 (LWS 35Y), which had been out of use for some time. 14500/1 have been sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

Also sold are Cheltenham & Gloucester Volvo B6/Alexander Dash 30831/2 (L831/2 CDG) and MetroRider 47967 (N215 VRC) to Red Kite, St Helens and Mercedes Benz 811D/Marshall 41804 (L804 XDG) to Erith Commercial (dealer).

Sold to Nu Venture, Aylesford, Kent are driver trainer Leyland Lynx 29614 (G614 CEF) and former Stagecoach Wales Leyland Titan 10592 (NUW 592Y), which Cheltenham & Gloucester had stored since 2005. The chassis remains of Swindon & District 1986 Leyland Olympian 14464 (MHS 4P, C464 SSO) have been scrapped at Stroud; its body was scrapped last year.

Stagecoach Yorkshire ST

Dennis Dart SLFs 33094-7 (T63 AUA, T965 PVR, Y951/2 XRN) are here from Stagecoach Manchester. They were all new to Dennis's, Dukinfield, which Stagecoach Manchester took over last year. 33094/5 have Plaxton Pointer 2 B39F and B36F bodywork respectively, while 33096/7 have East Lancs Spryte B37F bodies.

Re-registered are Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 16867 (YTC 838) back to its original N417 JBV and Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton 52522 (YTC 49) back to T872 RGA, while Dart/Plaxton 32195 (K1 YTB) has become K547 JHL.

Hardwick, Carlton (dealer) has taken Volvo B6s 30904/9/10/3/30 (L279 JAO, L403/4/8 JBD, L440 LWA) and Dennis Darts 32027 (H551 XGK), 32177/95 (K591 MGT, K547 JHL), 32667/73/9/84/96 (K108 XHK, J521/43 GCD, K554 NHC, K584 ODY), 32914 (L115 HHV) for scrap.

Stansted Transit

New is Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart/B29F EU06 KPA.

STB Coaches, Chadwell St Mary, Essex

Former Hedingham Omnibuses Bedford YMT/Plaxton BHK 710X is here after a spell with Travelux, Stanford-le-Hope.

Stephenson, Rochford, Essex

Acquired via Ensign (dealer) is former Stagecoach East Leyland Olympian/Alexander RL-type H51/36F F630 MSL.

Another notable vehicle on hire for contracted service 14 (Southend-Shoeburyness) while Super Pointer Dart EU05 CZA underwent body repairs in July and August was Alexander Dennis Enviro200 prototype demonstrator SN54 GRU.

Stewart, Mortimer, Berks

SN06 KPR is a new Mercedes-Benz Vario O814/KVC B24F.

GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

VE

Veolia

WG

Wellglade
Group



Timetrak's Carlyle Darline-bodied Dennis Dart, J272 SOC, in Staines bus station before the company ceased trading. **MARK LYONS**

Stones, Glazebury, Lancs

Following the delivery of Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Dart BUS 51T, Dennis Dart/Plaxton BUS 51T was re-registered R91 RWH.

Stott, Oldham

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver S578 XOM has been acquired from Zak's, Birmingham.

Suffolk County Council

The fourth Alexander Dennis Enviro300 here is SN06 BOV. SN06 BOH was noted at Ipswich Buses' Constantine Road premises and SN06 BOJ/U are already in service, replacing coaches. 12.8m Alexander Dennis Enviro300 Skoolbus demonstrator SN55 HSF has been on loan.

Sullivan Buses, Potters Bar

Leyland Titan T1027 (A27 THV) and Dennis Javelin JP209 (M209 BGK) have been withdrawn.

Summertime Travel, Summercourt, Cornwall

Open-top Bristol VRT/SL3 UWV 613S has been re-registered OUI 1852.

Swift, Great Yarmouth.

Recent acquisitions are Volvo B12M/Sunsundegui C53Ft CE02 YRX, ex-Bebb, Llantwit Fardre, and Dennis Javelin/Wadham Stringer DP70F P109 WJO, ex-Woodside, Sheffield.

Tate, Barnsley

Acquired are Volvo B6/Alexander Dash B40F M421 PVN, ex-Go North East (new to OK Travel) and Dennis Javelin 12SDA2158/Neoplan Transliner C53F M907 OVR ex-Lever, St Helens (new to Timeline, Bolton). Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer S793 RRL is on loan from Dawsonrentals (dealer).

Tees Valley, Marske-by-the-Sea

Acquisitions here are rebodied Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R/Duple C51F DWF 23V from Jones, Llandilo; Leyland Olympian ONTL11/2R/ECW H50/31D OFS 680Y from Powell, Hellaby; and ONLXB/1R/ECW H45/32F A658 OCX from Yorkshire Traction.

Terravision, Stansted Airport

Another tri-axle Scania K114EB/Irizar Century C65FL here is YN06 NZA.

Thamesdown Transport

The company kindly advises that three Leyland Olympian ONLXV/1RZ/Alexander RL-type H45/30F, 401-3 (G522/3/1 WJF), have been acquired for additional student services starting in September. First repainted, into blue, was 401.

Dennis Dominator/East Lancs 69 (H969 XHR) has been repainted allover white after a period as an Asda overall advertisement.

Withdrawn are Leyland Fleetline/Alexander 271 (MFX 171W) and ECW-bodied 303 (BMR 203V). Dennis Dart 106 (K106 OMW) finally went to Sureline, Weymouth in August.

Timetrak, Upper Halliford, Middlesex

Operations finished at the end of the summer school term. The fleet comprised Bristol VRT FDV 818V, which LOTS records was the last of its type to operate in London (it was used sometimes on a service into Kingston), Dennis Dart/Carlyle J272 SOC, MetroRider L618 LJM and MAN/Optare Vecta M814 PRA.

TM Travel, Chesterfield

Another ex-Dublin Leyland Olympian/Alexander (Belfast) RH-type is L720 SNO (93 D 10165).

Town & Country, Thurrock, Essex

Mercedes-Benz Vario T457 HNH, Dennis Dart SLF T439 EBD and Optare Excels P323 KAR, R375/7/8 DJN, have all returned to Dawsonrentals, leaving no low-floor buses in the fleet.

Transdev Harrogate & District TD

Burnley & Pendle Volvo B10B/Alexander Strider 505 (N505 HWY) hasn't yet materialised and its transfer is now in doubt.

Transdev London TD

Dennis Trident TA271 (LG02 FDJ) was damaged by fire and is being assessed for repair. MCW Metrobus M1014 (A714 THV) has been broken up and M1023/7/8 (A723/7/8 THV) have gone to PVS, Barnsley. Volvo Olympians remaining for private hire

and driver training work are being repainted in the now banned (on TfL work) London United livery of red with grey top and skirt.

Transdev Yellow Buses TD

This may turn out to be the last year of open-top operation here. Service 12 no longer serves Hengistbury Head and Christchurch — local press reports say it's been losing money for some time — and City Sightseeing has already pulled out of Bournemouth.

Ensign (dealer), Purfleet has sold Volvo Citybuses 201/3 (C201 YPR, D203 ELJ) to Dunn-Line. Dennis Dominator 265 (H265 MFX) has gone for scrap.

Travel London NX

Dennis Trident TA45 (YN51 KVB) has been destroyed by fire. Mercedes-Benz Varios 748/54/7/8 (S548/54/7 BNV, V258 BNV) have returned to Dawsonrentals.

Travel Wright, Newark

New is Plaxton Primo KX06 LXP.

Trent Barton WG

Mercedes-Benz Vario 290 (S290 UAL) has gone to Notts & Derby and Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 899 (P411 BNR) is back with Kinchbus. Volvo B10B/Northern Counties Paladins 112-4/6 (L112-4/6 LRA) are in store at Langley Mill.

Truronian, Truro

TransBus Enviro300/B44F KW02 DRO/V, DSE (BN-DN02 EDN) went to Ryanair at Dublin Airport, but KW02 DSE and KW02 DRZ (EN02 EDN) had gone to Thomson Group, Glasgow by late August.

Trustline, Hunsdon, Herts

Acquired are ex-Go North East Volvo B6/Alexander Dash B40F M424 PVN, M426/30 RDC and Optare MetroRider P428 VRG.

The Plaxton Primo, MX55 WDA, has returned to Mistral. Dennis Dart M150 HPL, Leyland Lynx K101 JMV and Leyland Olympian C34 CHM have been sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

Weardale, Stanhope, Co Durham

Another ex-Stagecoach East Leyland Olympian/Alexander RL H51/36F here is F620 MSL.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks from me on behalf of readers to each of the following for giving your time to contribute to my columns:

Thanks this month to the following for your most welcome contributions to Fleet News by letter and by e-mail: N. Ames, Andrew Babbs, Andrew Bagshaw, Chris Barker, Bill Barlow, Stephen Barton, Michael Bewes, Kenneth Bladon, Derek Bradfield, British Bus Publishing, British Trolleybus Society, Bus Fare, Cambridge Omnibus Society, Cambus, Roger Capel, Roger Carey, Anthony Carver-Smith, Andrew P. Churchill, Chris Corroy, Richard Cranmer, Crosville Enthusiasts Club, Cumbria Transport Society, Anthony Delaine-Smith, Nigel Diplock, Julian Dolman, Ensignbus, Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group, Essex Bus News, Matthew Evans, Ian Francis, Fyde Tramway Society, Greater Manchester Transport Society, Jack Grove, Peter Guppy, Adrian Healey, Phil Hiles, Stephen E. Hodgson, Jack Hollington, Tony F. Hunter, Paul D. Johnson, The Journal, Steven Knight, Lancaster & Morecambe PSV Society, Lincolnshire & East Yorkshire Transport Review, London Omnibus Traction Society, Christopher Lowe, M&D and East Kent Bus Club, M&T News, Ian McColl, Merseyside Bus Club, Metroliner, Geoff Mills, Geoff Nelson, Ross Newman, Simon Nicholas, Billy Nicol, David A. Noddings, Northern Group Enthusiasts Club, Nottingham City Transport, PSV Circle, Deric Pemberton, James Penton, Bob Perrin, John Podgorski, T. S. Powell, H. Powell, Ribbles Enthusiasts Club, Graham Richardson, M. G. Robins, Michelle Robinson, Dave Russell, Phil Shafe, Norman Sharrock, Sheffield Omnibus Enthusiasts Society, Ian Simpson, Adrian C. Small, David Smith, R. G. Smith, Southdown Enthusiasts Club, Eric Speckman, Alan Spencer, Staffordshire Bus Enthusiasts Group, Stagecoach Manchester, Stagecoach Transit, David Stanier, Chris Stewart, Geoff Stewart, Stephen Swinn, John Taylor, Thamesdown Transport, Dave B. Thomas, Steve Thompson, Nick Thomson, Transpire — The Chesterfield Bus Society, United Enthusiasts Club, D. E. Wall, J. Watson, Trevor Watson, Michael P. Webster, Peter Weetman, Wessex bi-monthly Transport Review, Wessex Transport Society, West Yorkshire Information Service, West Yorkshire Metro Transport News, Wheels, Lee Whitehead, Dave Wilder, Trystan Williams, John Young.

Leyland Atlantean/Alexander AVK 176V has been sold for preservation, Leyland Olympian/East Lincs B101 PHC has gone to Procter, Bedale for non-PSV use and ex-Bournemouth Marshall-bodied Olympian TJT 189X is being cannibalised.

Weavaway, Newbury

MCW Metrobuses B10 MSC, MSE (F214/5 UUN; EA 1844, DY 8312) passed to Allander, Milngavie, in August via Southdown PSV, Copthorne (dealer). Similar OIL 4201 (EB17 JAR, DU 1637) has been painted purple.

Wiltax, New Haw, Surrey

Leyland National Greenway/DP49F PDZ 6275 (UFG 54S) has been acquired.

Wilts & Dorset GA

Optare Excels 3613-5 (HF03 HJY/Z, HKA), bought for the aborted Poole park-&-ride scheme for which they wore a purple and yellow livery, have been transferred from service X4 (Salisbury-Bath) to the new London Road park-&-ride service in Salisbury (3613 in fleet livery, 3614/5 in green and white), the city's fourth park-&-ride.

Wings, Hayes, Middlesex

New are three more Mercedes-Benz Tourinos, two of which are C24Ft executive coaches and the other is C34F.

Winson, Loughborough

Leyland Olympian CWR 525Y has been deroofed.

Woof, Sedburgh, Cumbria

New here is Mercedes-Benz Atego 1018/Unvi Cimo C34F SN06 AKU, which has replaced Autobus Classique-bodied Vario 0814D X804 HCT.

Z&S International, Aylesbury

New is Volvo B7R/Sunsundegui Sideral C57F FJ06 ZXZ.

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET: Selwyns Travel Ltd

BASED: Head Office and depot — Cavendish Farm Road Weston, Runcorn, Cheshire, sub-depots at Melbourne Avenue, Manchester Airport and Delphwood Drive, Sherdley Road, St Helens. Associated company is Hardings Tours, based at St Johns Road, Huyton, Merseyside.

WEBSITES: www.selwyns.co.uk, www.hardingtours.co.uk

FOUNDED: 1968 by Robert Alun Jones, as Selwyns Mini Travel, named after his son Selwyn, who took over the helm in 1975 when his father died. The company remains family owned. It operated minicoaches until 1979, when the 10-vehicle firm purchased 30-vehicle Yates of Runcorn. Started operations at Manchester Airport in 1984 and purchased the contract business of Starline Travel, Knutsford in 1996, when North Western took over Starline's bus routes. Purchased 12-vehicle Hardings Tours in March this year

WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?: Contracts and private hires from north Cheshire, Merseyside and south Manchester. Hardings operates British and European tours programme from Merseyside and north Cheshire. Nine National Express services run to Glasgow, Edinburgh, Southsea and London. The 17 Manchester Airport vehicles work airside and landside for nearly 60 contractors. No commercial bus services are now operated, and the company has withdrawn from all supported services except those operated by the six battery electric minibuses on the St Helens town network.

LIVERY: White with Selwyns tricolour flag of green, orange and blue stripes; some coaches carry the stripes along their skirts. Hardings Tours coaches are white with red, orange and yellow horizontal and diagonal stripes. Twenty coaches are in National Express livery, the six Tecnobuses are in Merseytravel yellow.

HOW MANY VEHICLES?: 62 (42 coaches, 12 minicoaches, eight buses) plus 14 Hardings (11 coaches and three minicoaches). Two buses are for sale — a Plaxton-bodied Dennis Dart SLF and the last of four Wright Cadet-bodied DAF SB120s that operated the 500 Liverpool Airport shuttle for five years.

NEWEST VEHICLES?:

Four Volvo B12Bs with Caetano Levante bodywork delivered August for National Express service 060 (Liverpool-Manchester). The first is registered FH06 EBO, the remainder entered service 1 September with 56 registrations

MOST INTERESTING VEHICLE?:

The six Italian-built Tecnobus Pantheon 11-seaters are the only ones in this country. Managing director Selwyn Jones remembers a Plaxton-bodied Bedford J2 20-seater that never seemed to break down or even wear out its tyres. More recent oddities were four rock band coaches owned in the late 1990s, Van Hool Astromega and Neoplan Skyliner double-deckers, a Setra S215 Tornado and a Mercedes-Benz O303.



Above: Tecnobus Pantheon six-wheeler DE52 NYY in St Helens.

X781 NWX, one of the Wright Cadet-bodied DAF SB120s operated on the Liverpool Airport Express. It has since joined the Arriva Midlands fleet.

Pictures by ANDREW JAROSZ



GROUP CODES

AA
Arriva
Passenger
Services

DG
Comfort
Delgro

EB
Ensignbus

EY
EYMS
Group

FG
FirstGroup

GA
Go-Ahead
Group

NX
National
Express
Group

ST
Stagecoach
Group

TD
Transdev

TGM
Tellings -
Golden
Miller

VE
Veolia

WG
Wellglade
Group

Scottish reports should be sent, please, to:
**Sandy Macdonald, 12 Morton Gardens,
 Maxwell Park, Glasgow, G41 4AF** to reach him by
 18 October for the December issue.

ABC Travel, Kirkcowan

With control passing to King, Kirkcowan in April, the former Armstrong, Castle Douglas business is currently trading as ABC Travel. From 9 August, Castle Douglas town service 512 was expanded but with operation of weekday journeys to Auchencarn and Laurieston transferred to council-owned DGC Buses. Other services operated are Monday to Saturday 503 (Castle Douglas health centre-Lochfoot via Clarebrand, Old Bridge or Urr, Kirkpatrick Durham, Springholm), and Saturdays-only 515 (Castle Douglas, Tesco-Mossdale via Townhead of Greenlaw, Laurieston) and 516 (Castle Douglas, Tesco-Auchencarn via Gelston, Palnackie).

Aberfeldy Motors

C49Ft-seated Bova HD122-340 No.39 (SP06 AEC) was new in April and Sitar Beluga C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz O815D 40 (SA52 JLV, BIB 9842, SA52 JLV) arrived in June ex-Bibby, Ingletton; 40 was immediately re-registered XSV 892.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62s 23/9 (R90 AMS, Y15 AMS) and Onyx-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 614D 26 (V2 AMS) were sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis by June.

Aberfoyle Motors

This old-established coach operator recently acquired a new Caetano C49Ft-seated Mercedes-Benz Touro, BU06 CUH.

A&P Coaches, Barrhead

New half-hourly, weekday daytime service 8 (Arden-Pollok Centre via Kennishead) is due to start on 4 October.

Arriva Scotland West AA

Double-deckers transferred from Arriva North East companies and noted with this fleet by August included MCW H43/28F-bodied MCW Metrobus DR101s 620 (WLT 954, A954 SUL), 621 (A959 SYF), 623/4 (B112/6 WUL); ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RHs 7214/23 (D187,203 FYM); and Alexander RH-type H45/29F-bodied Leyland Olympian ON2R50C13Z4 7274 (L274 FVN).

Austin, Earlston

C52Ft-seated Bova HD131-430 YJ06 GMF was new in April.

Unvi-bodied Mercedes-Benz Atego 1223L SN54 GWV was re-registered USU 643 in March and Plaxton Panther-bodied Volvo B12B YN05 UUY was re-registered KSU 175 in June.

Bain, Oldmeldrum

B40F-seated BMC Falcon 1100 SV06 ESN was new in April and similar SV06 ESG is also B40F.

Blue Bus, Shotts

A proposed new Monday to Saturday summer season service, X58 (Livingston-St Andrews via Dunfermline and Glenrothes), fell foul of the bus registration regulations and did not start as intended in July. Fife Council, however, put up roadside information in time for its start, which will not take place for this year at least.

Service 702 (Livingston-Shotts) is being cancelled from early October, but service 77 (Livingston-New Lanark) is being expanded then to compete with the daytime journeys on the Lanark-Biggarr route, which Irvine, Law provides under contract to Strathclyde Partnership for Transport.

Bulldog, Bathgate

Sunday service 405 (Livingston bus station-Murieston/Carmondean/Kirkton) and Saturday service 123 (Bathgate-Harthill) are being cancelled from 2 October and 13 October respectively.

Business Buses, Kilwinning

Rare Ramseier & Jenzer-bodied Volvo C10M-70 C152 SSD (MIL 2978, UIL 7815, C661 KDS, XSU 908, C661 KDS) was re-registered JIB 292 in May.

Caber, Aberfeldy

Van Hool Alizée C49Ft-bodied DAF MB230 DFC 586 (G372 RHG, EFC 221, G266 EHD) joined this fleet by June, ex-Dalybus, Standish.

SCOTTISH COLUMN

SANDY MACDONALD



Stagecoach/Citylink ends challenge to taxis

The Stagecoach/Scottish Citylink joint venture challenge to the taxi trade with its Glasgow Airport Hotel HopAir service ends on 16 October, after only five months.

Operator-licensed, demand-responsive service 501 operates daily between the airport and George Square in the city centre via the Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre, but also diverts to various city centre hotels. The service is operated by Stagecoach Glasgow Mercedes-Benz Vito seven-seaters used originally on the Edinburgh-Dunfermline Yellow Taxibus service, but repainted in a version of Citylink livery. £5 single and £9 return premium fares are charged.

Last year, Fairline Coaches proposed a similar type of service for Glasgow Airport, using fully accessible new Optare Solos and catering for a wider market with more city centre penetration. Strathclyde Passenger Transport (as Strathclyde Partnership for Transport was known then) submitted a Bus Route Development Grant application, but the scheme was abandoned after the commercial Hotel HopAir service started, as SPT alerted the Scottish Executive to the fact that it could no longer support the Fairline scheme. It may be that the Fairline route could again qualify for BRDF.

Competition concern over Stagecoach/Citylink joint venture's future

The Competition Commission has concluded provisionally that the Stagecoach/Scottish Citylink joint venture could lead to higher fares and reduced service levels on the Glasgow-Aberdeen and Edinburgh-Inverness routes.

■ See news p7

Travel Wishart nets Arbroath services

Travel Wishart, based in Frickheim and part of National Express-owned Travel Dundee, has won Angus Council contracts to operate five Arbroath town services until August 2009.

Hourly routes 37 (Warddykes/Letham Grange), 46 (Aikman Road) 49 (Hospitalfield/Arbroath Infirmary) and two-hourly 50 (Red Lion Caravan Park) radiate from Arbroath bus station. From 28 October, service 50 will operate between the bus station and Millgate Loan only for the winter season. All of these Monday to Saturday daytime services started on 14 August. The company also operates daily journeys on Arbroath town service 35/140 between the bus station and Auchmithie.

Coakley, Motherwell

Monday to Saturday service 226 (Hamilton-Hillhouse) is due to start on 16 October, and service 255 (Glasgow, George Square-Hamilton bus station via Uddingston) is to be withdrawn from 19 October.

Davies, Plean

Beulas C51F-bodied Iveco EuroRider 391 12.35 FE51 RFJ was acquired recently from M-Line, Alloa.

Dickson, Paisley

Recent arrivals are Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50 L657 HKS and Autobus-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario R35 WDA. The latter is in a pink livery for a free shuttle service to Mecca Bingo, Paisley.

Docherty, Glasgow

Monday to Saturday service 20X (Drumchapel-Gartnavel Hospital with peak-hour extension to/from Glasgow Cross) is due to start on 27 September.

Doig, Glasgow

Unvi-bodied Mercedes-Benz SN06 KKY was new in June, but further details are unknown.

Caetano Compass-bodied Dennis Dart SLF V664 FPO passed to Lothian Buses in August.

Dunn, Port Glasgow

Noted with this operator in May were Plaxton C25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L644 VCV ex-Selvey, Cambuslang and similar B25F-bodied K232 SFJ.

Essbee, Coatbridge

Leyland National Greenways YEV 317/24S were acquired by August ex-Blackburn Transport 429/30 and are in use in the mainly red fleet livery.

Essbee-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D 20 (SF04 ZPV) was sold by August.

First Aberdeen FG

Optare Solo M950 demonstrator YJ06 YSG arrived for a short spell on loan at the end of May. It was allocated the 'demonstrator' fleetnumber 028 for its visit and was used on service 8 at least.

First Edinburgh FG

Additional First West Yorkshire Alexander Royale H43/29F-bodied Volvo Olympians are 30828-33 (R648-53 HYG), which arrived in June.

Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50 Fm7 (M677 SSX) of Ferrymill Motors, Torrance was operating from Musselburgh depot during August.

Wright Solar-bodied Scania L94UB 65694 was repainted into the two-tone blue and pink Unilink livery in August.

Wright Renown-bodied B10BLEs 62234/7 (Y943/5 CSF) were transferred to First South Yorkshire in May.

Alexander AT-bodied Leyland Tiger TRBTL11/2R 90144 (ALS 103Y, FSU 383, ALS 103Y) was sold to M8 Recovery (dealer), Uddingston by May. Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50 31282 (G295 OGE) was sold to Campbell (dealer), Alexandria in July and Roe-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R 31756 (NTC 135Y) passed then to Kells Transport Museum, Cork.

The contract to operate Stirling park-&-ride service 731 passed to Harlequin, Dunblane from 21 August.

First Glasgow FG

A summary of the position regarding the 123 new Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLEs for this fleet is that 106 are in service, three are still on extended loan to Aircoach in Ireland but will reach this fleet eventually, the four diverted to First Aberdeen will be replaced in due course by four similar new vehicles and the outstanding 10 will arrive next year.

Alexander Strider-bodied Volvo B10B-58s 61348/9/57/8/67/8 [SV311/2/20/1/08/9] (L201/2/10/1 KFS, L308/9 VSU) passed to First Eastern Counties in July, while similar 61350/1/3/4/6/9-66/9 [SV313/4/6/7/9/22/01-7/10] (L203/4/6/7/9/12 KSX, L301-7/10 VSU) were transferred to First Manchester in August.

Northern Counties Palatine II-bodied Volvo Olympian 31502 [VO160] (R660 DUS) was burnt out in August and will be scrapped.

Gibson, Renfrew

Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLF V700 CBC has been repainted into the new dark blue and white swoops livery.

Glasgow Citybus

Alexander Dash B40F-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDL N202 WSB, new to Oban & District, was transferred from West Coast Motors to this fleet in August, and entered service in full fleet livery.

Carlyle Dartline-bodied Dennis Dart 8.5SDL H166 NON had left the fleet by August, and Wright Handybus-bodied Dart 9.8SDL J639 KCU has been withdrawn and is being broken up for spares.

Right: Travel Wishart W308 (T577 ASN), an Optare Solo M920, operating route 140 from Arbroath.
PHIL HALEWOOD

Travel Dundee managing director Jim Lee says: 'This is an important addition to the work that Travel Wishart will now perform for the town. We are confident that our services will operate well, and that Arbroath will continue to receive a quality performance from our business.'

Expanded park-&-ride service for Stirling

After a year of operation, the Stirling park-&-ride scheme was expanded to operate six days a week from 21 August in a bid to tackle city centre congestion.

Owing to its popularity since it started in September last year, Stirling Council has extended the service to operate every 10/12 min

from 07.30 until 18.30 on Mondays to Saturdays — 20.30hrs on Thursdays for late night shopping. A Sunday service will also operate throughout the festive season. The return journey costs £1 for adults with half-fare for children, but as an introductory incentive to get drivers to try out the service it was free throughout August.

The new bus service, operated by Harlequin Coaches, is open to all and gives access for public transport users to Springkerse Retail Park as well as Forthbank sports and football stadium. It operates through Forthside and avoids the busy

Kerse Road and Craigs roundabout. Journey times are around 10min.

The park-&-ride site, funded by the Scottish Executive's Public Transport Fund, has the types of facilities for users that are normally only available in multi-storey car parks. As well as being covered by closed circuit television, there is a sheltered waiting area with toilets and the site is attended during opening hours. It has been recognised by Central Scotland Police and British Parking as a safe place to park, and this has been marked with the presentation of a ParkMark award.



Above: First Glasgow has the first large scale contract to operate BMC 1100FE 55-seat yellow schoolbuses in Scotland carrying pupils temporarily relocated from Gryffe High School in Renfrewshire. Here, 68565 (SF55 TXB) undertakes a trial run at Magnus Road, Houston. **STUART LITTLE**



Above: N202 WSB, one of two Alexander Dash-bodied Dennis Darts new to Oban & District in 1996, has been transferred from West Coast Motors' Dunoon depot to the Glasgow Citybus subsidiary. On 26 August, it was back in Dunoon carrying pipe bands participating in the Cowal Highland Games. **DONALD BOOTH**

Harlequin, Dunblane

As mentioned above, operation of Stirling Council's park-&-ride service P1 (Springkerse car park-Stirling bus station) passed from First Edinburgh to this company from 21 August. Two new B37F-seated Optare Solos, YJ06 FXO/Z, are being used in a mainly white livery with Park-&-Ride branding and route information.

Harte, Greenock

Plaxton Premiere 350-bodied Volvo B10M-62 N657 THO (A18 XEL) was re-registered IIB 1618 in May.

Henderson, Hamilton

Optare Solo M920 704 (MV04 GXF) has had its lower half painted blue.

Following the delivery of new vehicles, similar M850s X332 ABU, X248 VWR returned to Blythswood (dealer), Glasgow by August.

Operation of short-term Strathclyde Partnership for Transport services 8/BA/9 (Lanark-Glespin), 135 (Lanark town service) 800 (Lanark Ring'n'Ride) and 801 (Braehead-Lanark) ceased on 27 August.

Horsburgh, Pumpherston

Another five Leyland National Greenways joined this fleet in August in the shape of Volvo-engined, B41F-seated HPF 313N, LRN 552N, JGG 907P, AYR 324T and BYW 361V ex-Blackburn Transport 530/27/32/1/26.

Vehicles currently being scrapped include Leyland National NL116AL11/2R KSX 105X; similar NL116TL11/2R B141 KSF; Duple Laser-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH C64 PSG; Mercedes-Benz 609D D32 DSX, J291 URF; and Ford Transits K930 HSO, L842 HMS.

Service X90 (Dunfermline-Livingston, Kirkton Campus), funded jointly by West Lothian and Fife councils, is being withdrawn from 29 September.

Hutchison, Overtown

Two coaches were hired in during July to help cope with hires and tours work. Van Hool Alizée T9 bodied Volvo B10M-62 Y15 AMS was used still in its previous owner Aberfeldy Motor Services' blue livery and former Allander, Milngavie Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7R SF03 ACJ (3786 AT, SF03 ACJ) was used in all-over white — both with Hutchison fleetname on the front. At least the B7R had gone by the end of July.

continued overleaf...

GROUP CODES
AA
Arriva Passenger Services
DG
Comfort DelGro
FG
FirstGroup
LB
Lothian Buses
NX
National Express Group
RN
Rapsons
ST
Stagecoach Group

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 P507 VUS, badly damaged in an accident on the M74 and then further damaged by vandals in April, returned from being repaired by Plaxton in August and is back in use.

Irvine, Law

Former Allander, Milngavie Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7R SF03 ACJ (3786 AT, SF03 ACJ) was used by this operator in August.

Irvine, Salsburgh

MCW-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102 A619 BCN (ex-Go North East) was acquired in August.

Jay, Greengairs

KVC-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SK03 ANU passed to Hanson, Linthorpe by May.

Key, Johnstone

Ferrymill Motors, Torrance Fm25, Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L311 YDU, was on loan during August.

Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D M11 (J211 KTT) is being used as a source of spares.

Kingshouse, Balquhider

LDV Convey minibuses P428 RCA, MX54 ZBC were re-registered K100, 300 KHT respectively in April and Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 L302 ORS (FSU 335, L7 TCC) was re-registered K500 KHT by August.

Kiwi, Newton Stewart

Caetano Optimo C22F-bodied Toyota Coaster BB50R GX02 AHN was acquired in September last year, ex-Plant, Cheadle. Similar HZB50R M654 SBL was sold to Ferguson (dealer), East Whitburn in part exchange.

Lafferty, Glenboig

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/2Rs OFS 692, 700Y (new to Lothian) were acquired by August ex-Marbill, Beith.

Lothian LB

New Airlink-liveried Scania OmniCity CN94UD double-deckers 995/6 (SK06 AHF/G) entered service on 24 August. 998 (SK06 AHL) had also been delivered by then, but 997/9 had not appeared.

A rather unexpected purchase is Caetano Compass B44F-bodied Dennis Dart SLF V664 FPO, acquired in August from Doig, Glasgow for use as project vehicle A01 in the ancillary fleet.

McColl, Balloch

Onyx C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D MX53 ZWC joined this fleet last December ex-Campbell, Balloch.

Optare Solo demonstrator YJ06 YSG was reported to be on loan to this operator in July.

Right and below: Lothian 995/6 (SK06 AHF/G), the first production Polish-built Scania OmniCity double-deckers to enter service, on their first two days operating the Edinburgh Airport link. **KEITH MCGILLIVRAY**

McCreadie, Airdrie

B31F-seated Optare MetroRider MR15 M629 WBV was being used by this operator in July, still in the livery of its previous owner, Blackburn Transport.

MacEwan, Amisfield

LDV Convey T716 TCS was acquired from Meffan, Kiriemuir by June.

McGill, Greenock

The next two new Mercedes-Benz Citaro buses are due to be delivered in December.

McKindless, Wishaw

Optare Delta B49F-bodied DAF SB220s G501/3/7/10 XBL were acquired in July ex-Reading Transport 501/3/7/10. Northern Counties H47/27D-bodied Leyland Olympians G536/9 VBB also arrived then ex-Arriva London L536/9.

Service 31 (Lanark-Hamilton via Clyde Valley) has been doubled to operate half-hourly on weekdays, with alternate journeys in Larkhall operating via the Cross. This adds to competition with Whitelaw's Coaches between Larkhall and Hamilton.

MacPhail, Salsburgh

Van Hool Alizée C46F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 MUI 5608 (R908 YBA) was acquired in May ex-Currie, Carlisle.

Mac Tours, Edinburgh LB

1992 Alexander Dash-bodied Dennis Dart 9SDL 196 (K119 CSG), the Edinburgh Castle shuttle bus, was cut up at Seafield in August, having suffered engine failure which rendered it beyond economic repair. The contract for operation of the Edinburgh Castle Shuttle service was suspended this year.

Marbill, Beith

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/2Rs OFS 688/95Y passed to Garnett, Tindale Crescent in March,

while similar OFS 692, 700Y had reached Lafferty, Glenboig by August.

MCT, Motherwell

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12M P1 MCT (SC02 JJZ, 12 HM, KSK 980) passed to A-to-B, Luton in March.

Meffan, Kiriemuir ST

This fleet was renumbered into the Stagecoach system in July and comprises Leyland Leopards 25770/3 (EGB 70/3T); Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 40175-7 (L311/21 AUT, P799 KSF); Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 41189, 41333/5/40/1 (N134 GAG, F485 GGG, TIL 7897 F29 CWY, TIL 8208/7 F926/8 WYU); Mercedes-Benz 814D 41951 (L550 JFS); Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 41982 (Y924 SVV); Mercedes-Benz 609D 41987 (? KIB 6527 VLT 217 E104 UNE); Mercedes-Benz Varios 42236/9 (KIB 6527 R207 OAO, R966 MGB); LDV Convoys 49601/2 (T705/12 TCS); Volvo B10M-61 52052 (YSV 904 D806 SGB); and Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH 59082 (FSU 309, E640 BRS, BSK 756, E640 BRS). This list corrects the previous list published in March *Buses*, which was based on an early list of acquired vehicles from Stagecoach.

LDV Convey T716 TCS passed to MacEwan, Amisfield by June.

Miller, Airdrie

Plaxton C51F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH C53 PUX (6404 VC, C473 CAP, VWT 618) arrived in February ex-Newport, Knockin Heath.

Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R KUI 1042 (A203 RUR) passed to Blyth, Leven in June.

M-Line, Alloa

Setra S210HD IJI 336 (A18 MHD, G623 BRT, 221 GRA, 9466 MW, 7572 MW) was re-registered G431 JSG by June, allowing Neoplan Skyliner N122/3 E89 VWA (PNR 723, IJI 336, E89 VWA) to become IJI 336 once again.



Alexander-bodied Scania N113DRB E307 EVW was acquired by Lawrence & Harding, St Ann's Chapel in May and Beulas-bodied Iveco EuroRider 391 12.35 FE51 RFJ passed to Davies, Plean by July.

Munro, Jedburgh

B29F-seated Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts V246 BNV and W562 JVV were acquired in June ex-de Courcey, Coventry and Merlin Venture, Birmingham respectively.

Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 814D M901 NKS and Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDL J955 SBU had left the fleet by June.

Park, Hamilton

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo double-deck coach KSK 981 has been repainted in Megabus all-over blue with no graphics but Megabus.com branding.

New owners for Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12M coaches sold some time ago include B&J, Barnoldswick (SG03 ZEP, KSK 980); NCB, Edstaston (SG03 ZBK, ZET/Z, 1 RWM, 3 HWS, KSK 948); Peart, Ilford (SG03 ZCB, HSK 655); Pike, Andover (SG03 ZEK, HSK 654); and Plastow, Wheatley (SG03 ZJH, LSK 509, 12 HM, 2 HW).

Prentice, Haddington

New Plaxton Cheetah-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814D SS06 PCH had joined this fleet by May Similar



Above: Munro, Jedburgh is operating 431 (SF06 ODS), a Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario with side wheelchair lift, on service 131 (Galashiels-Jedburgh-Newcastle). **STEVEN HODGSON**

VIL 4714 (R458 VSD) regained its original registration before passing to O'Hara, Ballaghdereen by March.

Riverside, Barrhead

Alexander Sprint DP25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds G195, 203 PAO joined this fleet by April ex-Stagecoach Bluebird 40195, 40203.

Royal Mail

LDV Convoy postbus BK03 YOL, used as a reserve for

Callander and Aberfoyle, is being written off following an accident in which it lost its roof.

Scotguide, Glasgow

MCW-bodied MCW Metrobus M587 (GYE 587W) passed to City Sightseeing, San Francisco by August.

Similar M75 (KGE 273T, WYW 75T), M1430 (C430 BUV) and East Lancs-bodied Leyland Olympian LO515 (A515 VKG) were sold for scrap earlier this year.

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:	Golden Eagle Coaches Ltd
BASED:	Muirhall Garage, Salsburgh, North Lanarkshire
FOUNDED:	Peter Irvine of Muirhall Cottage, Reid Street, Salsburgh bought his first bus in 1926 — Reo Sprinter VA 5023 — and was soon trading as Golden Eagle Coaches. His sons joined him later with John and Peter succeeding to the business of P. Irvine & Sons in 1954, but subsequently John was in charge. Despite the change of name, the company is in the hands of the next generation of the Irvine family, and celebrating its 80th anniversary this year.
WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:	Soon after the firm was established, authority was obtained to run an Airdrie-Salsburgh service, extended in 1929 to Dewshill. Excursions and tours from Salsburgh started in 1936. The business of Greenshields, Salsburgh was integrated shortly after that company sold out in 1959, thereby extending the traditional service beyond Salsburgh to Shotts. The local service side of the business was sold to Kelvin Central in 1994, but private hires, excursions and tours, and school contracts are still carried out.
LIVERY:	Originally maroon and off-white, then Post Office red in addition to or instead of the darker shade. Currently off-white, red and gold for coaches, with mainly red on buses. Large golden eagle logos on the side panels were a feature for many years.
HOW MANY VEHICLES?:	Up to 18, currently including Volvo B10M, B12M, Leyland Leopard and Tiger coaches, plus a few MCW Metrobuses for school work.
MOST UNUSUAL VEHICLE?:	The company built both bus and coach bodies on various types of chassis after World War 2 for both this fleet and a few other customers. The most unusual was DVD 829, a 1948 Foden PVSC6 coach. Willowbrook-bodied Bedford VAL14 buses BVD 828/9C of 1965 were also unusual.



Left: The most recently delivered new coach in the Golden Eagle fleet is Y998 TGG, a Jonckheere Mistral 50-bodied Volvo B10M-62 dating from 2001.

Below: Willowbrook-bodied AEC Reliance LHS 480P operating the Shotts-Airdrie service around 1978.



GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

DG

Comfort
DelGro

FG

FirstGroup

LB

Lothian
Buses

NX

National
Express
Group

RN

Rapsons

ST

Stagecoach
Group

Shuttle Buses, Kilwinning

Two new 8.9m Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Darts have been ordered for delivery by October and will be used on service X31.

Optare Nouvelle II-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814D W603 KFE joined the fleet by July ex-Fourways, Leeds. It joins similar T56 RJL, which was also new to Fourways and has been owned by Shuttle Buses since 2002. Another addition by July was Caetano Algarve II-bodied Dennis Javelin N590 GBW, but further details are awaited.

Dormobile-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D IU1 9892 (H124 YGG) and Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart 8.5SDL J383 GKH have been delicensed and stored.

Silverdale, New Stevenston

Robin Hood B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D G234 FJC joined this fleet by March.

Optare Solo M850 X248 VWR was sold to Blythswood (dealer), Glasgow in May and has since been hired to Henderson, Hamilton.

Skyline, Renfrew

Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D N996 CCC has been given an overall advertisement for Hot sunbed centre, and Carlyle Dartline-bodied Dennis Dart 8.5SDL H151 MOB is in the new two-tone blue and cream version of fleet livery.

Service 11 (Nitshill-Cardonald via Pollok Centre) is to be cancelled from 11 October.

Stagecoach Bluebird ST

Ex-Hong Kong Alexander-bodied tri-axle Leyland Olympian 13602 (WLT 416, ER 9289) was transferred to Strathtay in July.

Alexander H40/31F-bodied Albion Lowlander LR1 SRS 112, new as Alexander (Northern) NRE2 in 1963, was secured for preservation in July ex-Geddes (non-PSV), Colliston.

Stagecoach Glasgow ST

With the withdrawal of service 162 in August, most of the Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians were placed in reserve, but 14657 (C657 LFT) was transferred to Stagecoach Merseyside.

Stagecoach Western ST

New B27F-seated Optare Solos 47356-62/5 (SF06 OVG/H/J/K/L/M/N/P) are all based at Ayr depot.

Service changes from 21 August included the withdrawal of 13 (Saltcoats-Irvine).

Steele, Stevenston

Further to September Buses, Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R ATV 672T went for scrap in August.

Stepend, Glenmavis

Further to last month, W10 CAE is a Van Hool Alizée C49FT-bodied Volvo B10M-55 previously with Lane, Tredegar.

Strathtay ST

Megabus.com-liveried, ex-Hong Kong Alexander CH53/31F-bodied Leyland Olympian 13602 (WLT 416, ER 9289) was transferred to this fleet from Stagecoach Bluebird in July.

Stuart, Carluke

Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart W895 AGA was sold to Blythswood (dealer), Glasgow in May.

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport services 8/8A/9 (Lanark-Glespin), 135 (Lanark town service) 800 (Lanark Ring'n'Ride) and 801 (Braehead-Lanark) started from 27 August, as long-term replacements for the similar Avondale Coaches contracts terminated in June, and the interim Henderson Travel arrangements provided from June.

Thomson Group, Glasgow

C24F-seated Optare MetroRider MR15 JAZ 1817 arrived in May ex-Flexibus (Translink subsidiary) 1817.

Keillor B23C-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814D T443 EGD entered service in July on the Glasgow Airport route, in all-over yellow with Airbus Express lettering. Its history is not known, but with its centre entrance it is a strange choice of vehicle for this one-person-operated service, which is used by significant numbers of tourists and foreigners. It is also not clear how it meets the Glasgow Airport stipulation that buses on all services into the airport should be fully accessible. Similar T442 EGD, albeit with forward entrance, also entered service in July.



Above: As reported under the Stagecoach Bluebird heading, former Alexander (Northern) NRE2 (SRS 112), one of only two Alexander-bodied Albion Lowlander LR1s supplied new to the company in 1963, has been secured for preservation. It may be the first Lowlander with semi-automatic gearbox — typical of most Scottish Bus Group examples — to be restored. **JOHN KENNEDY**



Above: T443 EGD, the centre entrance Keillor-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario that the Thomson Group's New Concept Coach Hire company is operating between Glasgow Airport and the city centre. **KEITH MCGILLIVRAY**

However, two vehicles that meet the airport stipulation, TransBus Enviro300/B44F KW02 DRZ, DSE (DN/EN02 EDN) ex-Truronian, Truro, entered service in late August in all-over white. Optare MetroRider MR13 L385 YFT has been repainted in the overall red livery, with the new style names on the front in yellow.

Town & Country, Ceres

From 21 August, this taxi firm has operated Fife Council Go-Flexi demand-responsive services F3 (Cupar, Largoward, New Gilston, Woodside, Chance Inn, Craigrothie, Cuparmuir, Kemback, Leuchars Rail) and F4 (Anstruther, Arncroach, Pittenweem, Abercrombie, Cellardyke, Largoward, Kilconquhar, Collinsburgh).

Travel Wishart NX

Although they are operated by this company, registrations for the local services mentioned in Scottish Column are in the Travel Dundee name.

Walker Group, Barrhead

Whittaker-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D H313 TWE; Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds K392 SLB, N906 ETM; similar Alexander Sprint-bodied N480 XRC; and Excel-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614D T966 JAO have been repainted into the all-over yellow livery.

West Coast, Campbeltown

New B20F-seated Optare Solo SlimLine M880 YJ06 YSD had arrived by August and is based at Dunoon for use on the Argyll & Bute Council Cowal Dial-a-Bus service.

Premier C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D M995 HJU is another vehicle acquired with the Henderson, Tarbert business in April.

Van Hool Alizée T9-bodied VDL SB4000s YJ05 PYO/P have been re-registered L100, 200 WCM respectively.

Optare MetroRider MR15 L200 WCM has been withdrawn but its new registration is not known. Alexander Dash-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDL N202 WSB was transferred to Glasgow Citybus in August.

Wilson, Gourcock

Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds M327 TSF, M121 YCM; similar Wright-bodied J734 MFY; Wright (Wishaw)-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D GBZ 7213; and similar Wright NimBus-bodied NDZ 7925/9/31/2 had all gone by August.

Cruise ship days-only tour 27 (Greenock, Kilblain Street, Newark Castle and Lunderston Bay) and similar summer weekends service 28 are being cancelled from 18 and 27 October respectively.

WJC Buses, Chapelhall

East Lancs-rebodied Leyland Leopard PSU3B/3R H6 (LSG 27N, UPT 6N) has been brought out of hibernation and repainted into two-tone blue fleet colours.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

M. Anderson, D. Booth, C. Carberry, N. Cram, C. Douglas, central-scotland-bus@yahoo.com, First Glasgow, Harte Buses, I. Kerr, Lothian Buses, C. Mennie, G. Munro, R. Newman, PSV Circle, renfrewshirebus@yahoo.com, scotlandbus@yahoo.com, Shuttle Buses, Stagecoach Bluebird, sescotbus@yahoo.com, Stagecoach Glasgow, Stagecoach Western, J. Walter and J. Young have contributed news items this month. Their assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

Where to send your Irish news reports

Reports on Northern Ireland operators, please, to:
**G. Irvine Millar, 54 Castlemore Avenue,
Belfast, BT6 9RG.**

Reports on Irish Republic operators, please, to:
**Ian Molloy, Willow Grove, Newtownpark Avenue,
Blackrock, Co Dublin,**
or by e-mail to: ianmolloy30@gmail.com

MAJOR OPERATORS

Ulsterbus

Further new Scania L94UB/Wright Solar B44F in service are 839/41-7 (GEZ 7839/41-7), 2401-5 (FXI 401-5) at Antrim (839), Derry City (841-7, 2405) and Bangor (2401-4); recently delivered 818/25-38/40 are also B44F rather than the B43F capacity of previous Solars. The outstanding 75 of these 110 Scania's will be numbered 2406-80 and, like 2401-5, will re-use three-digit registration marks from Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-types, matching fleetnumbers as closely as surviving registrations permit.

Previously with the driver training school, 2002 (AXI 282), numerically the first of the 25 MAN ND363F/Ayats Bravo 1 double-deck coaches, entered service at Londonderry in August.

N-type Tigers 401-5 (FXI 401-5) have been re-registered JEZ 4092-6, while withdrawn Leyland Leopard/Alexander 217 (WOI 2217), 296/7-9 (AXI 296/7-9) and 331 (BXI 331) have become IEZ 8825, JEZ 2953, 3347/8, 2954/6.

Volvo B7TL/Alexander ALX 400 double-deckers 2990-3 (EEZ 2990-3) have been transferred from Coleraine (2990/1/3) and Londonderry (2992) to Great Victoria Street and branded for a new park-&-ride service between Sprucefield on the outskirts of Lisburn and Belfast city centre via the M1 motorway.

N-type Tigers 374 (DXI 3374) and 420 (GXI 420) are delicensed to reserve while similar 355 (DXI 3355) is withdrawn with engine failure and probably will be scrapped.

Leopards 227/45 (WOI 2227/45), 283/8 (IEZ 2530, AXI 283; AXI 288), accident damaged N-type Tigers 365 (DXI 3365) and 1149 (LXI 7149) and fire damaged Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere 1567 (DAZ 1567) have gone to Hamill (dealer), Ahoghill for scrap. Leopard 334 (BXI 334) was sold to P. Haughey, Newry for preservation and similar 336 (GEZ 4737, BXI 336) to Glynn Pegg (dealer), Liverpool.

News of vehicles sold previously to the UK mainland is that Leyland Tiger/Duple 340 coach 530 (OXI 530) passed from Autocar, Five Oak Green to Plan-it Travel, Otford in May, then returned to Wealden PSV, Tonbridge (dealer) in July. Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 619 (CAZ 6619) passed from Autocar to Chalkwell, Sittingbourne. Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright 823 (NXI 6823) went to Wealden PSV from Staff Pay, Chatham, while Wealden sold similar 860 (NXI 6860) to Clegg & Brooking, Middle Wallop.

Leyland B21/Alexander (Belfast) prototype 3000 (YBJ 159X, WOI 607) passed to Wigley, Carlton (dealer) for scrap in June. Built in 1980, it underwent extensive trials before entering service in 1982, was sold to Ipswich Buses in 1991 and later to Road Car and Ellie Rose, Hull.

Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown 2838 is the latest vehicle to receive an overall 'wrap' advertisement for Spar.

Metro

Gardner-powered Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 2616 (NXI 4616) is the latest of this type to be sold to South Liverpool Commercial (dealer) for schoolbus conversion. More are expected to follow.

Flexibus

Optare MetroRider 1817 (JAZ 1817), sold at BCA Auctions via XBG Fleet Remarketing, is with Caledonian (Thomson), Glasgow.

Dublin Bus

More new Volvo B7TL/Alexander Dennis ALX400 H49/27F delivered include AX517/24/7/8 destined for Conyngham Road and (AX527/8) Donnybrook. In a departure from plan, AX504 upwards were parked unused at Harristown pending use on the two Ryder Cup golf tournament shuttle services — one from the Weston Aerodrome near Celbridge, the other from Louisa Bridge railway station — in September. The plan is to use AX449-548 and around 50 2005-registered AV-class B7TLs on the shuttles, many of which needed to have etched glass replaced ahead of the event. Seventy of them will be based at the former Dublin Bus garage at Broadstone (mothballed since Harristown opened



Above and right:

Three of the four types of yellow schoolbus being evaluated by Bus Éireann, Enviro300 AS3, Eurocoach-bodied Mercedes-Benz Atego ES1 (06 D 71402) and Vehixel-bodied Irisbus Scolabus IS3.

Pictures by DARREN HALL and K. MacLEOD

in October 2004), which may remain open after the tournament as a working Dublin Bus garage.

Meanwhile, a final government decision has yet to be taken on whether similar AX549-648, planned for fleet and service expansion this year, might instead be treated as advance deliveries towards 2007 fleet replacement.

Because of the Ryder Cup shuttles, Harristown will continue to operate Leyland Olympians RH138/9/59/60/6 and DAF SB220s AD66-70 at least until late-September.

Further withdrawn Olympians, SB220s and Volvo B10Bs (including VA1, 3, 7 and 8) will re-enter service in place of the AVs and AXs. Stored RH143/5/6/9/51/5/7/8/63/4 were back in service in early July providing special services to Oxygen concerts. Also back in service in August was RH161, while RH89-91, 144/78/50/2/62 were being prepared for return to service and RH157/8/63/4 have since been used as driver trainers, RH163 becoming a permanent trainer at Conyngham Road. RH160/6 may become permanent trainers after the Ryder Cup.

With an eye to the imminent commissioning of a Quality Bus Corridor bus lane at Crumlin Children's Hospital, route 123 was extended south to Kilnamanagh Road, Tallaght from 20 August. Its former southern terminus was directly on the planned road space of the QBC; related routes 121 and 122 will also require new termini.

Volvo B7TLs AV118-28 are to be repainted in the new turquoise Best Impressions-designed Airlink livery already carried by AV116/7. Volvo Olympian RV422 has lost its Fruit Shoot overall advertisement and is in standard blue/yellow fleet livery.

Bus Éireann

The first 20 new schoolbuses for almost 30 years are 12m Alexander Dennis Enviro300/B46F AS1-5. Turkish-built front-engined BMC 1100FEs BS1-5 (06 D 71433/4, 72328/1/31), Eurocoach-bodied Mercedes-Benz Ategos



ES1, 2 (06 D 71402, 71893) and ES3-5, plus Vehixel-bodied Irisbus Scolabus IS1-5. All have individual seatbelts and are painted overall yellow. We understand that each of the five operating regions (Broadstone, Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Galway) will evaluate one of each type pending a decision on large-scale purchases; unregistered IS1 was at Athlone garage in August. The last new schoolbus, Van Hool-McArdle-bodied Bedford NJM SS800, went to Coras Iompair Éireann in 1977.

The two Wright-bodied Scania L94UBs on five months' lease from Dawsonrentals for new Waterford city service 3C and 360 (see last month) were previously with Centra, London and are operating as SW1, 2 (98 D 76402, S350 SET; 01 D 92538, YL51 ZUD).

From 31 July, some journeys on service 30 (Donegal Town-Dublin) — all covered by joint operator McGeehan, Fintown — were diverted via Dublin Airport. A few years ago, for one summer only, Ulsterbus operated an Enniskillen-Dublin Airport express. Service 133A (Wicklow Town-Sandyford Luas tram terminus) — started late last year and operated under contract by Alpine Coaches — has been discontinued owing to lack of demand.



BOOKS

COLOURSCENE SNAPSHOT:
ALDENHAM AND CHISWICK

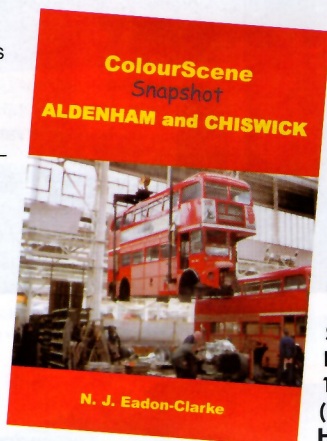
N. J. EADON-CLARKE, DTS PUBLISHING,
ISBN 1 900515 36 9, 240mm x 175mm,
96pp, HARDBACK, £16.95

The first of a new series from the publisher and

one of its more prolific authors, this is a colour picture album of scenes inside the hallowed portals of London Transport's two major bus overhaul facilities — the body repair factory at Aldenham and the predominantly chassis engineering facilities at Chiswick.

As the pictures were taken on open days between 1972 and 1983, they depict these facilities after their heyday, when a highly standardised fleet made up largely of RTs and Routemasters had been overhauled and reassembled on a production line basis. Indeed, as the opening commentary on Aldenham states, so well practiced was the system that a ferry driver could deliver one bus into Aldenham for overhaul and immediately collect a newly overhauled vehicle bearing the same identity.

While the author's commentary describes an Aldenham that, in full swing, was 'a mighty impressive sight, with the overhead cranes lifting



bodies in the main workshop where a line of some 50-plus buses was always being worked upon...' the reader has to imagine the full intensity of that description. Yes, there certainly are shots of buses suspended aloft in various states of repair, but they were not being worked upon on open days, so the pictures also convey a sense of emptiness and silence.

Nonetheless, they record much of what went on in these facilities, the states of disrepair that they were able to rectify, and they remind us of some of the exhibits on show at some of the open days.

EARLY TURN —
BRADFORD AND
TROLLEYBUSES 1960-72

STAN LEDGARD, BOBTAIL PRESS,
ISBN 0 951 10134 X, 205mm x
150mm, 64pp, SOFTBACK, £4.95
(From R. S. Ledgard, 22 Main Street,
Haworth, West Yorkshire, BD22 8DA)

This is the first of a trilogy written and published by Stan Ledgard, recalling his experiences as a conductor in the last years of Britain's first and last trolleybus system. This first part describes the routes operated from Duckworth Lane depot and will be followed by volumes entitled *Split Turn* and *Late Turn*.

This one is illustrated liberally with the author's own black-and-white photographs, which while not always reproduced to perfection, do convey a good sense of the landscapes and townscapes in which

these trolleybuses served one of the great textile cities. Some also capture incidents, like dewirements and changing a flat front tyre — an exercise conducted clearly in the days before the Health & Safety at Work Act stopped shed foremen from performing such a task at the kerbside. Others show how closely trolleybuses could be parked against one another in the depot with 'the thickness of a Mills & Bonn paperback between the rear of one and the headlight trim of the next' according to the text.

The written descriptions are particularly effective in recalling life conducting on the trolleybuses, of the dodges crews came up with to sneak an extra

tea, sticky bun or fish and chips within a 6min schedule. We learn of the more memorably difficult passengers, be they native Yorkshire drunks or newly arrived Asian immigrants apparently affecting not to know the correct fare and riding for next to nothing.

If you don't know your trolleybus lingo, some of the terms

might pass you by. 'Frogs', I know, are points in the overhead. I have to confess that I'm not so sure of what was a 'duck', though the description of one

EARLY TURN



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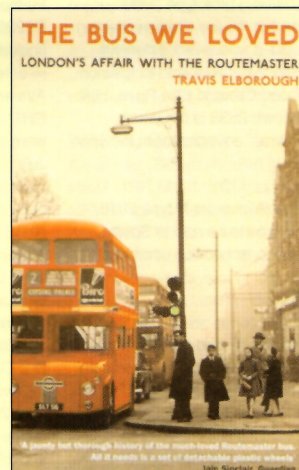
- **London's Major Bus Operators Fleet Allocations** to May 2006 - £3.50 (£2.50 to members).

- **London's Buses & Trams Route Working Index** to 5th May 2006 - £3.50 (£2.50 to members).

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having flown off a trolley boom in a dervirement and killing a young lad by the roadside at least conveyed an impression of what it might be and how lethal it could be when propelled by the bus equivalent of a catapult.

BYGONE LONDON

KEVIN McCORMACK, IAN ALLAN PUBLISHING, ISBN 0 7110 3107 X, 190mm x 150mm, 80pp, HARDBACK, £14.99

Kevin McCormack's *Streets of London* of five years ago launched a series covering other UK cities and towns. Their individual authors having picked up on the theme to put together some truly delightful books capturing colour scenes of buses, trams, trolleybuses and occasionally other forms of transport in the wider context of the changing landscapes in which they operate. This is the sequel to that first volume.

It covers the period from 1949 to 1979, wherever possible using photographs that have not been published before, notably including scenes from events like the 1951 Festival of Britain and 1953 Coronation, which we are more used to seeing in black-and-white than colour. Much the same can be said of the last years of London's trams, several of which are also portrayed.

Unlike *Streets of London*, this is a truly multi-modal book, with some especially atmospheric views of the early years of Heathrow Airport and the last operational days of its counterpart in Croydon. In similar vein, two of the author's own photographs of home deliveries — an electric bread van in Heston and horse-drawn milk float in Hayes End are remarkable not just for their sense of lost Britain but for the fact that they were taken as recently as 40 years ago.



The bus scenes include RM1 in service in 1958 with its first front radiator grille, an STL, night shots as well as day, such of forgotten episodes like Southend PD3s on hire

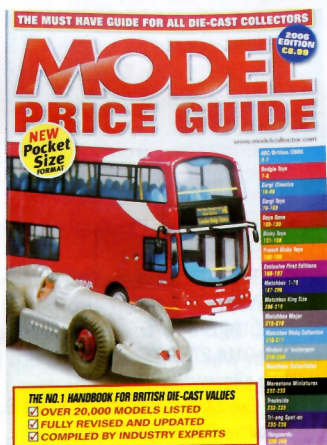
to London Transport in 1975 and — the last bus picture in the book — a truly creative 1962 view (through the girders of the Hungerford Bridge) of a roof box RT threading its way along a near traffic free Victoria Embankment.

Books reviewed by ALAN MILLAR

MODEL PRICE GUIDE 2006 EDITION

Published by IPC MEDIA (233 High Street, Croydon, CR9 1HZ), ISBN 0 86296 266 3., 210mm X 150mm., 250pp, SOFTBACK, £8.99

For the diecast collector, this tome is a must. It imparts a price guide to in excess of 20,000 models, covering the products of ABC/Britbus, Budgie, Corgi, Corgi Classics, Corgi/OOC, Corgi Toys, Creative Master Northcord, Days Gone/Lledo, Dinky Toys (France & UK), EFE, six categories of Matchbox



(Lesney, Universal, Tyco, Mattel), Morestone, Trackside, Triang Spot-on and Vanguards. And given that vast portfolio, yes, it embraces aircraft, buses, cars, coaches, lorries, military vehicles, trams, trucks, figures, road signs, *et al*.

Apart from a comprehensive listing of the above releases from each company's inception to the present day, also there are 126 colour photos within, many of which include both model vehicle and the box within which it was packaged, which a) is extremely useful and b) wonderfully nostalgic; additionally, many of the advertiser pages incorporate colour pictures of models various. A veritable treasure trove. In such an all-embracing work of this nature, it is inevitable that there are some mistakes, but spotted readily by the eye familiar with the subject matter.

Now, don't let this observation put you off. Despite the comprehensiveness of the book, in my opinion it is lacking. No dates are given for the introduction of individual models, which would be useful, and neither is there any detail of Code 2 and Code 3 models, nor of the many bus models sponsored by

events/rallies and museums various. But these latter can be gleaned from that other model bus bible, *EFE & Corgi OOC Model Buses*. Of course, what would be collector bliss would be to have amalgamated these two marvellous guides, giving an all-in-one. But such shortcomings notwithstanding, this is an invaluable work and a wonderful pick up and put down at leisure read.

It is recommended highly by the former general manager of Pelham & District Traction... see this month's *Diecast Model Buses* to learn his identity.

MICHAEL DRYHURST

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New for LRB 2007 is the introduction of a new section Bus Rapid Transit Vehicles, and the re-naming of the Tramway & Light Transit Equipment to Rapid Transit/Priority Equipment reflecting the increased emphasis on bus-based rapid transit systems rather than rail. Not all updated entries will be shown after June as most of the replies come in between May and August and it would not be practicable. The Little Red Book is published in September, in time for the coach and bus shows in the Autumn.

* - entries marked with a * have been updated by the entrant

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MIKE FENTON finds the only East Lancs Myllennium Hyline body currently resident in England

As I have shown before, East Lancashire Coachbuilders has made a speciality of rebodding older chassis, handling a wide variety of single and double-decked models, and I have already included three examples on Volvo chassis since these articles began in 1997.

This month, I am featuring another, a single-deck reboddy of a 12m B10M chassis, but one having the 70-seat capacity of a double-decker by virtue of its 3+2 seating arrangement. Like the rebodied Strathtay Leyland Tiger illustrated in my December 2005 article, a Myllennium Hyline body was chosen, being one of only two examples built on this chassis at the time of writing.

The first was 963 CDE of Welsh independent Jones of Login, Carmarthenshire, which received its new 70-

seat body in 2001. It was followed by Derbyshire independent Bagnall's of Swadlincote, which replaced the Duple body on acquired Volvo LCA 183Y with that shown here.

When I photographed it in May 2003, it had been in service in its new form for only a few months and had also been given cherished registration BAG 708S, joining several others in the fleet with BAG-S plates.



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PRESERVATION UPDATE

Bonnie bonzer bus is back and blooming

Star attraction at this year's Scottish Vintage Bus Museum open weekend on 19/20 August was the restored ex-Sydney Albion Venturer CX19GW double-decker shipped back to the UK nearly two years earlier.

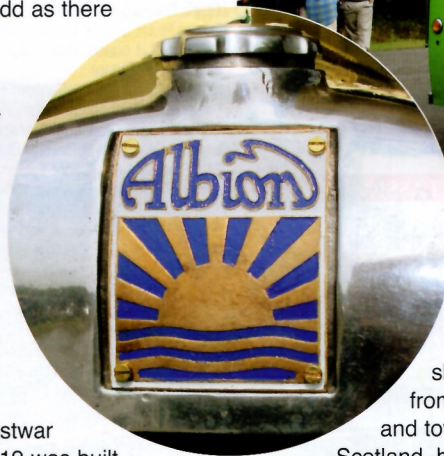
Thanks to a £30,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant, the Sydney Albion Venturer Group and restoration specialists based at the museum at Lathalmond, Fife have already returned all but the top deck interior to near original condition. When new, it had 59 seats and an extra canvas forward door, but it is being kept as a 61-seater with an open platform that — to British eyes — looks odd as there is no central stanchion.

The SAVG bought Commonwealth Engineering-bodied 1877 — 8ft-wide chassis built in Glasgow in 1946, bodied locally in 1947 — during a visit to Australia in February 2004. By 1949, when the New South Wales Department of Transport & Tramways had 143 of them, it was part of the world's largest fleet of postwar Venturer CX19s. The CX19 was built between 1938 and 1949 and was Albion's biggest selling double-decker. Newly restored 1877 is the only one now in Scotland, as the second largest postwar fleet — 48 with Glasgow Corporation — came out of service in 1961 before a bus preservation movement existed to save them.

Australian preservationist Robert Hood, who owns similar Venturer 1899 back home, flew to Lathalmond to assist with the final stages of restoration. Impressed by what he



Above and inset: Job done: Sydney Albion Venturer CX19 No.1877 at a launch event two days before the open weekend. The badge is a replica cast from an authentic original.



says was the 'gargantuan task' of shipping a double-decker from Australia to England and towing it overland to Scotland, he heaped praise on his new friends' hard work. 'The end result is superb. Better than when she first rolled out of Commonwealth Engineering when new.'

The bus clocked up 670,000 miles in 23 years' service in Sydney and is reckoned to have covered over 1million miles by the end of the 10 years it worked with smaller operators. The restoration work reflects a long and hard life in which, for example, 1877 retained its original crash gearbox, which has been rebuilt using the best parts of the

original and another for a CX39 Valiant single-decker.

The clutch has been revived with some contemporary Albion lorry parts and the radiator replaced by a prewar Venturer unit supplied to Glasgow Corporation. The authentic square radiator badge was cast from an original, which — 40 years after doing the deed — the SAVG's Paul Adams now admits to having unscrewed from a withdrawn Glasgow Venturer CX37 waiting to go for scrap in 1966. The corroded body pillars, back platform and many panels have been replaced.

Far from resting on its laurels, the Lathalmond museum — with a collection of over 180 vehicles it claims it is 'probably the



Left: Work in progress: Stripped to its framework, the Mann Egerton half-deck Leyland Royal Tiger reveals its truly eccentric seating arrangements.

One of the more intriguing projects for open weekend visitors to admire in progress was on JVB 908, a 1952 Leyland Royal Tiger PSU1/13 new to Homeland Tours of Croydon with what is believed to be the last surviving example of only around a dozen Mann Egerton half-deck coach bodies built. This extraordinary 50-seater — typical conventional coaches sat up to 41 in the same 30ft length — has face-to-face seats in compartments staggered in an interlocking one-up/one-down sequence. The layout was more innovative than practical, as half the passengers (including those in the four front seats) travelled facing backwards.

Now awaiting restoration is Central SMT L484 (GM 6384), a 1954 lowbridge all-Leyland Titan PD2/10, one of the last 10 double-deckers built for a Scottish fleet before Leyland ceased manufacturing bus bodies.

The weekend also commemorated the centenary of Scottish Motor Traction, the Edinburgh company that grew into the Scottish Bus Group and whose original operation went on to later lives as Scottish Omnibuses, Eastern Scottish, Lowland Omnibuses and First Edinburgh.

biggest bus museum in the world' — is progressing with several other ambitious projects. A prewar Leyland Tiger TS8 Special is undergoing a complete body rebuild and

SVBM founder Jasper Pettie has just acquired a 1936 Leyland Cheetah, which he plans to restore to Western SMT black and white livery.

Below: Task ahead: Central SMT L484, the 1954 all-Leyland Titan PD2/10 on which the SVBM hopes to start working soon.



Right: Among vehicles commemorating the SMT centenary was this 1947 Alexander-bodied AEC Regal O662, which isn't what it might first seem. Although it has operated as SMT B23 for several years, AWG 623 was Alexander A36 and later Alexander (Northern) NA36. SMT's contemporary buses, numbered B285-309, were all withdrawn by 1965. The company's real B23 was a 1958 AEC Reliance acquired with Baxter's of Airdrie in 1962. For the weekend, Lothian Buses — which emerged the winner of a bus war that First initiated in Edinburgh five years ago — had a friendly message with a threatening edge on the modern buses it took to the open weekend.





Left: Participating in the annual Brislington bus rally on 13 August was former Bristol Omnibus Company Leyland Olympian 9554 (A954 SAE), the last bus — chassis ON945 — built at the Bristol Commercial Vehicles plant in 1983. Following withdrawal by First Bristol, the Bristol Omnibus Vehicle Collection acquired it and its Roe body has been restored to original National Bus Company green. To mark its special significance, it also has been given a Bristol badge.

Brislington pictures by MARTIN CURTIS

RALLY CALENDAR UPDATE

SEPTEMBER

- 16/17 **Sandtoft Trolleybus Museum.**
Trolley Days and Model Weekend.
- 17 **Exeter.** West Country Gathering, Westpoint Showground, Clyst St Mary.
Amberley Museum annual bus rally.
- 24 **Duxford.** EFE Showbus International, Imperial War Museum, Duxford. Britain's biggest vintage and modern bus and coach rally.
- 30 **Crich Tramway Village,** Derbyshire, Enthusiasts' Day. Behind-the-scenes tours, vintage film footage and works cars.
- 30 (and 1 October)
Walthamstow, London E17. AEC Rally at Pump House Steam & Transport Museum.

OCTOBER

- 1 **Winkleigh Airfield, Devon.** West of England Transport Collection Gathering.
Amersham & District Running Day.
Ipswich Transport Museum 'Come and ride on our buses'.
Birkenhead. Wirral Bus & Tram Show.
- 8 **Canvey Island** open day and transport show, Castle Point Transport Museum.
Ruddington. End of Season Road Transport Gala at the Nottingham Transport Centre.
Sheffield Bus Museum special open day.
Glasgow Vintage Vehicle Trust open day at Bridgeton Bus Garage.
- 10 **Otley.** 10th Samuel Ledgard nostalgia evening, 19.30, Rose & Crown pub.
- 14/15 **Manchester 100** at Museum of Transport, Boyle Street.
- 15 **Sandtoft Trolleybus Museum** St Leger Historic Vehicle Rally.
Newport, Isle of Wight Bus Museum running day.
Oxford Bus Museum bus rally, Long Hanborough.
Wythall, Birmingham. Wumpty Twenty operating day at The Transport Museum.



A possibly never-to-be-repeated line-up of 15 preserved exposed radiator Bristol J, K and L-types — most from Bristol, Western National and Southern National and few under 50 years old — at the Brislington rally.

Below: Former King Alfred 590 (HOR 590E), an open-top Roe-bodied lowheight Leyland Atlantean, in Wimborne Minster on 13 August during the Wessex Transport Society's Festival of Transport. **CHRISTOPHER CARTER**



Change of date for German event

Next year's Historisches Omnibus Europatreffen event in Sinsheim, Germany has been put back by a week to 27-29 April.

Diecast model manufacturer EFE has now agreed to sponsor two subsidised trips for vehicles entered in EFE Showbus International on 24 September. As before (Preservation Update, July) the winning bus must be a type modeled in the EFE diecast range. If both the winner and runner up are linked to the EFE range, only the winner will be modeled.

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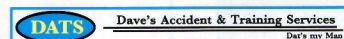
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- 459 Edinburgh, UK. Buses. June 1996. Video by Dave Spencer all operators as viewed on a cold, windy mid summer day. 60 min.
- 661 Edinburgh, UK. Buses. September 1998. Introduction of corporate First Group livery, open top services, all operators as seen in bright diffused light.
- 689 Bristol, UK. Buses. 1998/99. Most fleet numbers announced to aid identification, in winter sunshine between Dec 1998 and Jan 1999.

- 731 Edinburgh, UK. Buses. July 1999. With new Dennis Tridents in service, changes in Lothian fleetname, Vintage buses of Macs tours.
- 757 Birmingham, UK. Buses. November 1999. With fleet numbers announced. A variety of central locations with low floor deckers and articulated buses.
- 847 Birmingham, West Midlands. UK. Buses. November 2000. The Birmingham bus scenes in November 2000, extensive route alterations in the city centre.
- 872 Staffordshire. UK. Buses. Feb 2001. Hanley, then on to Burton for Stevensons in Arriva livery, a stopover in Rugeley finishing in Stafford.
- 882 Edinburgh / Falkirk. UK. April 2001. Buses. Falkirk bus station on a Monday afternoon and a visit to Edinburgh on a Tuesday morning.
- 929 West Midlands. UK. Buses. Oct 2001. Birmingham City Centre for diversions around reconstruction work.
- 937 Bristol, UK. Bus. November 2001. Two visits starting with December 2000 and then November 2001 also Western Super Mare
- 958 Edinburgh, UK. Buses. March 2002. Temporary coach stops, the latter days of the Lothian / First bus war (a nose to tail) and Macs tour fleet in operation



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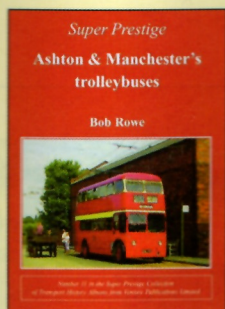
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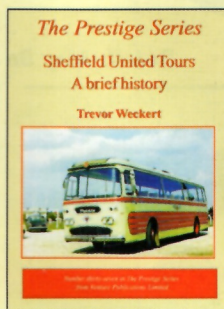


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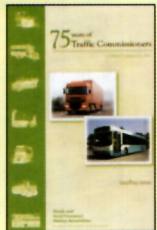
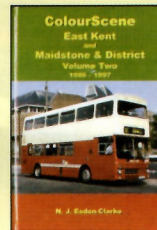
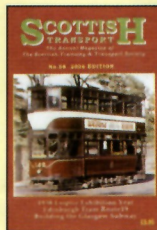
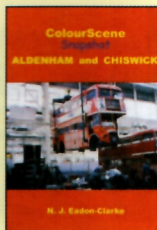
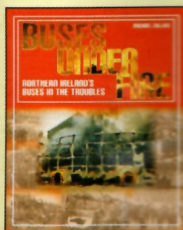
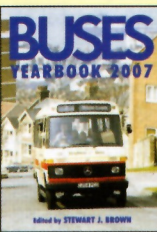
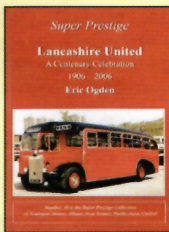
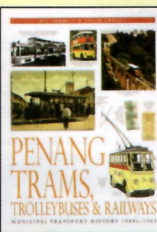
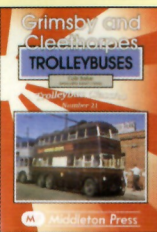
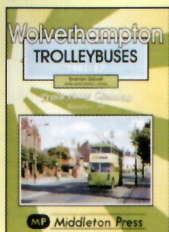
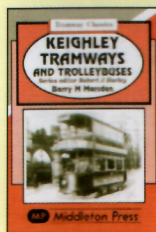
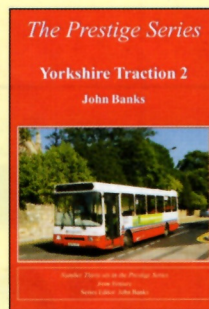
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28904 GM Atlantean FYLDE BOROUGH TRANSPORT

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17218 Leyland National Mki Long EASTERN NATIONAL

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Manchester's PD2's were a favoured bus with many of the drivers and our model features the very last of these in service from the Hyde Road Garage. Registered 3706 VM, fleet number 3706 is working route 98 to Waterhead and shows the remains of the Cave Brown heaters they were built with. AUGUST RELEASE ☐



28809DL Leyland Titan 2 Door BLACKBURN TRANSPORT DE-LUXE

Continuing to build our Blackburn Transport fleet this very attractive ex London Titan. Registered KYV 533X, fleet number 93 displays intricate in house advertising as it works Lancashire County Contract Service route 882. AUGUST RELEASE CERTIFICATED LIMITED EDITION. ☐



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National Express devotees will be delighted with this Paramount in the livery that these coaches were almost built to carry. Registered J123 AHH, Ribbles fleet number 1123 works route 540 Colne to London. AUGUST RELEASE. ☐



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29611 Leyland Olympian TEES & DISTRICT

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